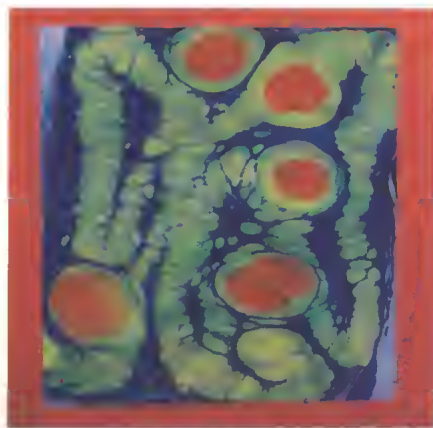


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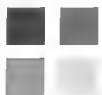
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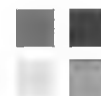
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Nursing Darling

Lance Crow

It is one of those ceilings with swirled textures of white plaster which could have been mistaken for a cavern floor, its tiny stalagmites are more actually stalactites created by a tradesman paid for his art, considered a service to the homeowner. A year ago he would have long been asleep by now, waking in the night only to the telephone or an urgent bladder. Tonight he would have welcomed the call of either phone or nature to occupy his mind. The ceiling offers no answers to his queries this eve, which was disgustingly consistent with the wisdom provided to him by it in the past three months.

The scape of the ceiling is dark and light, the moonlight through the open window creating play amongst the shadows in his eyes. It represents to him his life, the jagged points and their recesses are the choices he had made to this point, and the mystery of where exactly they had gotten him. Tonight the shadow seems particularly present. Has he been places and done things, held a position, been successful? Has he accomplished something? If so, what is it; more importantly, what did it mean? His life may have had implications, but did it have meaning? What did he mean? In the dark and the light of the ceiling he began to drift.

A young girl rides her bike through the rain. The residential streetlamps glare as the wind whips her hooded coat. Her great-aunt is not expecting her because of the weather; she would not be told no, and so her guardians acquiesced. The two were in the fourth chapter of *Alice in Wonderland*; what happens next, she wonders? She grips her copy of the book her great-aunt had given her and pedals excitedly.

In a high executive office, Wall Street, a diaper dandy, as his father had dubbed, sits in Italian leather and exhales cigarette smoke before rising to rejoin a meeting from which he excused himself five minutes prior. All the figures, tens of thousands of dead presidents, the dollars, to him, made no sense. Didn't they all stand to gain regardless of the outcome of the meeting? Did their stockholders benefit from this deliberation? His conscience was convicting him, the realization that his and his company's decisions effect more than simply those involved in the making of those decisions. Is a rich man always the best judge of how to allocate funds? He didn't even like the one-hundred and fortieth floor. What was the going price for happiness?

An officer of the law finishes dressing by tucking in his shirt and cinching his thick black leather belt, and tests the stability of his holster. He slips his pistol into place and clicks the button on the leather strap secure to the holster, holding the gun

(*Darling*, continued)

securely just below the hammer. He has no notion of what will happen once he settles into the squad car, the unpredictability of the job, he thought, was one of its chief draws. But was it really all that unpredictable? Someone would commit a crime and he would try to catch him, a husband and wife would bring a fight outside of their home and he would try to intervene. He would fight the fight, but what was the point, he wondered. Why the struggle, what did it matter? He left his apartment, a shaved-whisker film in the bathroom sink.

The wind paces up and the leaves of trees nearby and books on his desk, which stands by the open window, whisper; the swishing sigh of the trees and the crisp snap of the pages make him conscious of his next breath. He ponders the open window from the floor where he lays. He closes his eyes. Can one feel the earth moving when lying prone, suspended in black? Can one physically know, feel, the motion of the cosmos? He imagines he can feel it. He feels as a baby riding in a carriage pushed by loving hands.

The streetlamp flickers out, the electric supply a bit shaky, and flashes of lightning silhouette the landscape. The wind and rain are neither in short supply, however, and the lawns are especially soft. The nervous tread of a thief, he fancied himself a cat burglar, squishes silently across a backyard toward a wide cement porch with a staircase at the left leading up to a door. The lights are out as far as he can tell and he hears no noise inside the house as he presses his ear against the oaken door. He checks the lock, the door presses open on silent hinges. He clicks the latch behind and the atmosphere tranquilizes. He can hardly make out the sound of the storm in this setting, the home of another, though his senses are primed, his thoughts quick.

He finds himself in a small entryway, which opens through another doorway into a wide kitchen and dining room. The floor is wooden, an area rug lie beneath a large table in the center of a room with large windows in both of the outside walls. A homey chandelier hangs directly above the table. He notices the porch light on as its glare reflects off a mirror hung across from a closet in a narrow hallway. He sees nothing he might take in the kitchen or dining area, some pictures and a pear on a windowsill, a bowl, a few baskets on the countertop. He is looking for jewelry, watches, small items he can carry off easily, things some might not notice are missing. He passes into the narrow hall and sees a banister fencing a flight of stairs, just beyond the closet. He knows he must climb.



942. This is 942. We have a domestic, what is your location? Just passing Crimmer and St. Blaise. You're in the area, respond to the address 144 End Road, a man says he's waiting for you with the culprit. Affirmative, I'm on my way.

Officer 942 flips on his lightbar and the streets flood cherry and blueberry. He makes a right on Quiet St. and counts to twelve to stay his adrenaline.

She kicks the stand on her bike as she pulls up confusedly in front of her great aunt's home. A gust of wind blows back the hood from her head and her dark hair tethers its full length, like the weathervane on top of the house, marking the wind. A cop car and an ambulance are parked on the lawn, the lights of the house are on, the door closed. She approaches the walkway and a police officer stops her. Who are you young lady? Auntie lives here. We are going to read tonight. He looks at her with compassion. He takes a knee and raises his hand to grasp her shoulder. Your great auntie has died, sweetheart, he says to her eyes. Her heart stopped beating, a heart attack. I'm sorry. I will take you home. She clutches the book tight to her chest.

The clock reads three thirty. The storm quiets, but the wind spreads the raindrops and they seem more abundant. How long has he been floating through the cosmos? Did he feel movement? The air hovers close above him, pressing him against the floor. He feels pinned by gravity. He tries to lift his head but finds it stuck; he is powerless. He sits up frightened and climbs into his bed. He is to wake and work the next afternoon, yet he cannot close his eyes.

The young businessman is pulled from a meeting for a phone call. He takes most of his phone calls that come during meetings; it gives him the look of importance, plus the meetings depress him as if they possess some great, mysterious weight. The call is from one of his lawyers informing him that his aunt has died, a heart attack, a quick death. The news is unexpected, but not surprising. He thanks the lawyer and tells him he will call back once he is finished with the day's meetings. The lawyer expresses his condolences. On his way back into the conference room, he ponders whether to attend the funeral or send a check.

He sits there, dressed in black to the toe, and cups his head in his hands. Between his fingers sprout leaks of wavy brown hair. The officer had read him his rights, but opted not to cuff him.

(Darling, continued)

I am not a killer, am I? She is there, rocking near a small lamp in her chair; she sees me in the doorway as a board groans beneath my weight, and her eyes flicker out. She slumps over the arm of the rocker and hangs there limply; a small thud a few moments later makes me lament and forget the Fifth Amendment.

Why call the police, why dial? Why not run, escape? Because they will think I killed her. Might she have already been dead in the rocker before I entered the room? But those eyes, as if a switch went off or the wind snapped a light pole bearing a transformer. No, she was alive, and now...

The officer tells the thief that he will experience some leniency for his honesty, possibly only six months in the job. The man in black looked lighter. He hates his life and all of its glandular stimulation. Each time he enters a home fear calls, makes him respond. Each time he escapes, that fear yields to exultation and relief. That is no life, controlled by fear, overwhelmed in thrilling misdeed.

He opens his eyes and gazes at the wooden floor from his seat on the bottom stair. He sees the mirror, but sits below its line of reflection. As the officer helps him to his feet to escort him to the station, he glances at the mirror. He sees the old woman's eyes in his and offers them thanks.

The officer turns left onto Pawn St. following the directions that had been given the dispatcher over the telephone. The rain and wind have ceased and the streetlamps light well the residences of this community. He halts at 340 Pawn and leaves the car running. He opens his door and shuts it softly behind. The night is cool and moist and he inhales its moisture into his lungs. He walks around the nose of the cruiser and opens the passenger door. Extending his hand, he waits patiently, until a small, quivering palm brushes lightly against his own. He clasps gently and offers a slight tug. He noted mentally that she had spoken not a word since he met her on the flooded walkway.

As she steps a foot onto the curb, she is tumbling through the confusion of the eve's events. Just before her head clears the car and enters the atmosphere she hears three small, but sonorous words follow her exit. She is sure they came through the cage partition of the backseat. I'm sorry, darling. Her great auntie always called her darling. She looks over her shoulder through the back passenger-side window into eyes that mirrored those of her great aunt.

For want of sleeping, he paces the wooden floorboards of his room as quietly as they allow him. The rain had subsided and the wind, merely breath from the open



window. His thoughts drift from his lack of sleep to his duties he would perform later today. He wants to do something, not just be there. What could he possibly do that could be considered 'something'? His pacing increased in speed.

A strange night floods the memory of the police officer, 942, as he ascends the stairs to his second-floor apartment. A woman has died, and the only witness to the incident was the thief who had entered her house uninvited. This thief had proceeded to call the police and request an ambulance and then stuck around to be arrested for his crime, breaking and entering. What uncommon thing had occurred? A thief with a conscience? He showers and settles into bed with his thoughts, excited about waking the next eve when he would rejoin his patrol.

Inside the walls of 340 Pawn St., the family of the deceased woman makes arrangements for funeral and burial. A letter had arrived in the mail that morning from a certain wealthy businessman explaining that he would regretfully not be able to attend the ceremonies for his aunt, but would still like to convey his remorse for her loss. Contained in the envelope is a check that will more than cover the expenses that were to be incurred, and the apology letter for his absence is seemingly genuine.

The grandfather insists that the girl's father is a good man and that he is simply so busy maintaining his company that he cannot not get away. She remains silent, as if she is sleeping. It seems to the girl that he had already gotten away from that which he was truly running. She has been raised to this point by her grandparents, in absence of her father, and has no idea who her mother is. Yes, he has escaped her. He ran from the reality of her, left her to find her own life, as long as that life had nothing to do with him. He sends money each week and she will go to college after high school, but fatherless she remains. And now she is truly alone. She exits the family room, slowly walking upstairs into her bedroom and closes the door quietly behind. She waits for darkness, for her grandparents to sleep, so she may cry. Her years flood by in silent tears.

The thief sits patiently in his cell until his parole comes. He reads many books and painstakingly examines his life. He concludes that his life is insignificant. He reads more books; he quits pretending to know all the answers. On the day after his parole he finds a local Christian church and trains to become a missionary. Last heard, he lives in Uganda building hospitals. Each time he eases a windowpane into place and

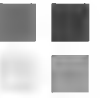


(*Darling*, continued)

glances at his reflection, the old woman's eyes gaze back at him. Thank you, he says to them. His years bring him love despite his hardships.

In one hour he will get into his Toyota Corolla and drive twenty minutes to Willow Shade Nursing Home where he cares specifically for a few of the residents. He changes diapers and administers sponge baths, but mostly he talks to them. To him, their lives are everything. One life in particular is heavy on his heart. What was that item she is always clutching to her breast? Why will she not speak? He finishes his breakfast in his spacious kitchen/dining area, two pieces of peanut butter toast, and opens the windows on the outside walls to let the house breathe.

He wanders through a narrow hallway, passing a closet to his left, a mirror to his right, and turns to go upstairs. He finds the passage to the attic dustier than he remembers, and shakily climbs the narrow staircase into the peaked room. As he moves some boxes of clothes, an old wooden chest seizes his attention. He moves to it and opens the top. The chest is empty but for one thing, an old leather-bound copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, marked at what he finds to be the fourth chapter. He decides to take it to work, leaving the bookmark in, in hopes that she might like the story; unbeknownst to him, inside the cover of the book rests a picture of an old woman with particularly memorable eyes.



His Evening Drink

Natalie Lapacek

He is drunk on my perfume

and feverishly kisses the lips
that ache for his,
he warms me with a strong embrace
and lights the evening with
the flame
that burns in his eyes,
he touches my ear through whispers
that tell me I am
the only one —

I let him drink.



Back at 34 Golfview Road

Jen Zak

It's cold again.
My life repeating
the sadness and heartbreak
of last winter.

At the same familiar home
with the same comfy bed
where we sleep side by side
in a warm and safe embrace.

The chilled weather lingers
and mingles in between
our hushed conversations
absorbed by the snow.

My body shakes with the cold,
my tears freezing onto my cheeks.
The only warmth I have
comes from his eyes.

A biting wind separates us, making it
more and more clear that it is time for me to leave.



We embrace for a moment,
trying to capture an eternity
and my explorer waits impatiently
like the warden to take me away.

Away from him,
back inside my steel prison
that I am forced to steer
down a lonely, deserted road.

One of our songs plays on the stereo
a sort of split-screen sadness
how I wish he would come
and rescue me from this loneliness.

To wave goodbye
to leave his hand
to leave the place
that I sometimes call home.



On the El Train

Anthony G. Salati

Prayers billow like smoke
rising grey and sleek in
the musty train, moons
have come and gone, duct tape
jeans and dreads, a fancy blouse
too old for her youth —
the city races by like grave
yards do, no chance
to model or to be a lady,
only a field flower never plucked
or fucked, I suppose the rope
burns did not hurt so much
after her neck broke.



How Burger King Stole California

Natalie Lapacek

"Hey Connie— go on break."

Connie Berkston threw down the grease-laden food tray she had been washing back in the dirty dishwater, deciding that it could wait thirty minutes to be washed. She shook the mixture of water, soap bubbles, and grease from her hands and wiped them off on her apron— right on the part that had Burger King's lovely logo, "Have it Your Way."

The manager, Bill, approached her before she could make her way to the office.

"I want you back in thirty. I'm gonna' need you on boards."

Connie rolled her eyes. Did he think she would stay clocked out longer than she had to? She had bills to pay. Thirty minutes was enough to take off the lousy pay Burger King was giving her.

"Yeah, yeah. I know."

Bill scowled at Connie, just like he always did whenever she got short with him. She gave a slight smile, delighting in the fact that it pissed him off. Who is he, anyway? Connie constantly wondered. He was thirty years old, still living with his mom, and cleaning up hamburger grease for a living. Was that blue manager's shirt supposed to make him better or something? Sure didn't do anything for his looks. What a loser.

As Connie approached the office, she came to a slow realization.

Connie was twenty-two years old; she was living in a one-room apartment in a trashy hillbilly town because it was the most her salary would allow her. She wasn't going to college, and she was . . . cleaning hamburger grease for living.

Connie sat in the one nearly broken chair in the office. She slumped down and took out her carton of Marlboro Reds. Smoking in the office wasn't allowed. Connie took out a cigarette and lit up, taking a long drag.

And they won't even give me a blue shirt, she thought, exhaling the smoke right on a sign that said, "If there's time to lean, there's time to clean" in bright purple bubble letters. Bastards.

She took another drag and then held the cigarette in her fingers. She leaned back, and the chair squeaked noisily. Connie looked around her, noticing how yellowed the walls were from previous employees breaking the "No Smoking" rule. There was a single cabinet, which held tape, sanitizer, and some old band-aids. The bottom hinge had broken, so the door sat at an angle. She looked upward at the single light above her. There was a puddle of water settled in the clear plastic covering of the neon light.

(Burger King, continued)

A drop leaked through a crack in the plastic and hit her arm. She wiped off the cold liquid and ashed her cigarette in the garbage can, since there were no ashtrays.

Connie had always wanted to travel. She wanted to go far away from shit-hole Burger Kings, cocky managers, and shoddy one-room apartments. She wanted to go to California. She knew these things existed in California just as much as they did in the Midwest, probably more. But California had more; it had sunshine, and artists and actors, and even a whole ocean. It had opportunity—places where your looks could get you good-paying jobs where you didn't have to wear a burgundy polo with holes in it. Connie had always been told she was a pretty girl. She knew with a little bit of lipstick and a low-cut shirt, she could get a job anywhere.

Connie took another drag of her cigarette, holding the smoke in for a long time. As she leaned back farther in her chair, she noticed the safe sitting in the corner. It was opened.

She stared at the stacks of crisp green bills on top of the rolls of change. Fives. Tens. Twenties. Fifties. It was a lot of money. Probably at least a few months worth of her salary.

Connie thought of how nice it would be not to work for three months. No sore feet or backaches from standing all night. Weekends free to go out. No yellowed offices or leaky lights. No Bill.

She continued to stare at the money; everything around her disappeared as her eyes moved from one bulky stack to another. How many people had given that money just to clog their arteries with Whoppers? She wondered. How many people had thrown their money away to this place? Connie swallowed hard. If she had that much money, she wouldn't throw it away. That was for sure. She'd get a plane ticket to California.

If she had that money, not only would she be sure not to waste it, she would be robbing the place. It would close down, and no one would ever have to work his or her miserable life away in that shit-hole again. It was definitely a win-win solution. And she'd be able to do it. All she would have to do is take the money, and not return for her break. She'd tell them she was stopping home for a minute. She'd be packing her bags and on the next flight out.

She peeked out the office doorway to see Bill busily making sandwiches while hassling the teenaged drive-through cashier. Connie knew he wouldn't notice until he counted out the drawers later that night. By then, she would be out. Taking one wary glance out the doorway, Connie began to wheel her chair toward the safe. It squeaked

noisily, but nobody heard because of all the customers coming in. She went to the safe, and put her hand on a stack of fifties. It felt thick, smooth—inviting.

"Connie!"

She jumped in her chair, quickly removing her hand from the safe. Shit.

"Connie!" Bill's crabby voice called out to her again. "Hey, I'm gonna' need you back in. We're getting our butts kicked out here."

Connie wheeled away from the safe and stood up, her cigarette hanging between her lips. Before turning to the door, she looked again to the safe. She puffed on her cigarette slowly and looked out of the office. Bill was hurriedly making sandwiches and running to the deep fryers; she stepped out slightly to see customers piling in the front door. The front cashier girl was standing dazedly at her register and the drive-through girl was collecting money from a car at the window. Connie lightly treaded back into the office.

She quickly knelt down by the safe and reached inside. Feeling the green papers slide into her palms, she frantically clutched them and they crumbled in her fists. Her cigarette was still hanging in her mouth, ashes began to fall on her arms. One swipe, that's all it would take. She could take all the money and just walk out. Well, maybe run. A smirk came across her face. Yeah, she would definitely run.

"*Connie!* Get your *ass* out here!"

She froze at the sound of Bill's voice, her arms still in the safe, her hands still clenching the cash. Now! She had to do it now! She needed more money, though. She grabbed farther back into the safe to gather more bills. If she was going to do this, she had to go all out.

Suddenly, she heard an angry clanging. She knew that sound. It was a fry basket being tossed on the fry rack. It was an indignant toss.

"Bill! Hey! I'm waiting on a cheeseburger here!" the drive-through girl yelled.

He did not answer, and Connie knew it was because he was coming to the office. She hastily shoved the money back into the safe and bolted to her feet.

"Connie!" He yelled as his stocky figure loomed in the doorway. "*I asked* you to get out here and *help* me!"

As soon as she saw him her eyes narrowed in fury. She removed her cigarette from her lips.

"*I heard* you, Bill!"

"Well, what are you doing? Get out here!"

Connie sucked in a mouthful of smoke.

"I was finishing my cigarette."

(*Burger King*, continued)

"You can't *smoke* in here! Now put out that cigarette, get your apron on, and get out here and help me before I write you up!"

At this, Bill stormed back out to the restaurant. Connie cast her eyes to the floor. A dull aching crept over her insides. It made her feel tired, sick. She had already been written up twice— one more time and she lost her job. She couldn't do that. Her parents weren't going to take her in anymore. She needed to eat, needed to pay the bills. There was no room for write-ups. Connie looked nostalgically at the safe.

No room for California.

She jerked her head sideways, cringing as if she had been struck by a menacing blow. Putting the cigarette back between her lips, she grabbed the apron. She slipped it on and began to tie the strings behind her angrily, making them so tight they cut into her sides. As she tied the strings, she noticed the garbage can in the corner of the office. She took one final drag of her cigarette and chucked it into the garbage can on her way out.

If she couldn't rob the place, she'd just burn it down.



Peaches and Cream

Jean Monfort

A beautiful room.
Two beds, two toilets.
A peaches and cream sort of room.
We sit, awed by the Frenchness.
Turn on the TV and start to flip
Horror.
The romance novels lied.
Sex was not very pretty.
At least, not from that camera angle.



Pillow Series

bleached, dyed, and beaded cotton

Erin Salinas





Like Coffee

Teresa Moreno

A plain cup of coffee is bitter
Rarely enjoyed by itself
The one who yearns for it
Has acquired its taste
If I add to it
Perhaps I will like it more
A little sugar here
Some caramel there
I add more and more
Until the true form has vanished
Leaving the drink with a new tolerable taste
And me with a blind love for it
I fear you are my cup of coffee
Only liked when altered
Changing the real you
Giving me a false sense of love
My love, I now know
You are my plain cup of coffee
And I have come to realize
I long for coffee no more



Slanted Sun

Dr. Charles Kerlin

The slanted, fall sun warms the stone bench
by the pond
Which is grooved and stained by fallen linden leaves.
I cover the stains with shed sweater, piled books,
and lean back into the bench
which warms me through my shirt.
Inside my bricked office building it is cold
enough for the sweater and more.
Inside, tension and loneliness hide on the covered skin.

Is there a warmer sun above Maratrea,
below Salerno?
Is your room bright there?
Are your sweaters packed there?
Are flowers there still in bloom?
And do the linden leaves, there, stain your
veranda window causing shadows which
dance in the warm breeze
Across your hands and face and body?

Winter will begin here tomorrow.
Rain will wash the linden leaves into the pond,
And I will move back inside,
To be warmed by an artificial fire.

But still there is time for one more dream
of you dancing in Maratrea,
And of dancing linden leaves,
on your hands and face and body.

The days there will also shorten.
Linden leaves will fall and stain your veranda floor
And darkness there will also come early with the slanted sun.



Untitled

stained glass

Natalie Salinas

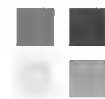




Freed

Kenny Shumard

I concede
You can recede into my memory
So proceed to forget about me
I won't forget about you
Regret about you
Fret about you
You've gone your way
Now I'll go mine
In time I'll be alright
But not tonight
Not tonight
Indeed.



Obedience

photograph

Ami Tuft





The Bachelor

Becky Scherer

You are of a sorry race.
We hide our pity like the sun
on a cloudy day and smile at
you, the clown at a child's party
who is no longer a child and who
never really liked clowns to begin with.
Afraid of the empty bedroom and even
emptier bed, you lay your head
on the couch each night, TV on,
lights shining, dishes dirty and stacked
in the sink, your own art
in the privacy of your lonely kitchen.
Be proud of what you have, yes,
but don't forget that which you do not.



Half-Life

Dr. Mark R. Seely

There are strict limits—
a badge that monitors my exposure
hangs like a bomb-coiled alarm clock from my neck.

A moment or two in your presence,
enough risk for one day.

I can feel your heat from here,
its source, your own decay—
emitting particles of your surplus essence,
a celestial snake discharging subatomic skin in random pulses.

I watch from behind protective glass
as the others are drawn to you like middle-aged moths
to bathe in the blistering caress of your eyes,
the carcinogenic patina of your smile.



Department Store Lady

Susan Huss

She shuffles across the floor
And you panic, try to run.
There's no escape; she's got you.
Now you must hear her story
While she sprays perfume at you.

How her daughter is so smart,
She runs a law firm in Maine.
What a success her son is,
He will be the next Bill Gates.
You've heard the story before.

Yet she goes on,
And you can only stare at
The wrinkles on her forehead,
The spit that flies from her mouth,
Tight bun that pulls at her scalp.

And you can only think of
How hot her moldy breath is,
How nasally her voice is,
How many she has bored in
All the decades she has lived.

And as you finally come
Back to earth and the boredom of
The Department Store Lady,
You look down at her nametag
And see you have the same name.



Color Wheel Composition

acrylic

Elizabeth Wissel





Unjust

Kenny Shumard

This silence is not golden
But broken
And breaking
And aching
And taking the soul from us
The whole of us
Til there is no us
Til there is you and me
Separately
Without unity
Or harmony
So much beauty...
Only a memory.



The First Time I Went Upstairs with a Cowboy

Stacy Claussen

It was a warm May evening, and I was in Tad Anderson's mother's car on the way to his senior prom. I was living in Chicago at the time and had made the journey south to Indiana with my mom the previous night. My grandmother lived in Indiana and was overjoyed at the thought of sharing the "prom" experience.

Tad was my cousin Jake's best friend, and devastatingly handsome. He was to me a rugged cowboy, 6'4" and wide in berth, with bulging muscles from working weekends bailing hay. His hair was blond and shoulder length, and it contrasted deeply with his black tuxedo. Damn he smelled good.

My dress was deep midnight blue and it rested low on my artificially tanned shoulders. The dress was long with a full skirt and a six-ringed hoop underneath. My mom and my grandmother had taken me to an elite formal gown establishment where they sat for over two hours sipping tea and eating finger sandwiches. They watched me try on countless formal gowns, with the assistance of my very own salesperson/alterations professional. My mother picked out a lacy pink Cinderella-like costume that made me want to vomit, but my grandmother saved the day by arguing for the old fashioned midnight blue ball gown, which was a bit risqué in my mother's opinion.

Tad parked the car near the country club and turned off the stereo. We sat in the dim twilight for a few moments in silence. I felt that he wanted to ask me something, but he couldn't find the right words, and he kept looking out the driver's side window until he finally turned to me and said, "We don't have to stay here all night, ya know. A friend of mine is having a party at his house, and his parents are in Cancun. It's a log cabin house; can you believe it? They had it hauled in on a semi and the construction guys just put it together like a puzzle. I swear it looks like an old-time saloon, ya know, like the kinds you see in old westerns." He shook his head slowly in amazement, whistling through his teeth. He was obviously nervous.

In spite of all the crazy words he had said, I knew what he wanted. Why didn't he just say, "Are we gonna' do it tonight or what?"

He finally got out of the car and walked around to the passenger side, opening the door for me. I took the hand he offered, balanced myself on my new high-heeled pumps, looked up at him, and answers, "Sure, I'm up for a party." He held my hand as we walked together into his senior prom.

Later, I agreed that the house he had described to me was truly amazing. It was a two-story house that truly looked like a saloon you see in movies about the old west. It actually had a long bar running along one side of the dining room. The bar had a long mirror above it, and when you sat at the bar and looked in the mirror you could see the

(Cowboy, continued)

reflection of a spiral staircase leading up to a balcony and four bedrooms. I imaged that those were the rooms where the saloon girls did their business.

I sat on a bar stool sipping from a bottle of Jim Beam. I was totally lost in a fantasy world of my own creation. The saloon was packed with dandy looking gentlemen, cowboys, and busty saloon girls all drinking up what the saloon had to offer—a keg of Miller Lite and assorted hard liquors from the cabinet with the broken lock behind the bar. Someone was banging out a tune on a piano. And who the hell was smoking a cigar? I swung around on my bar stool and met eye to eye with my very own cowboy, blowing smoke rings to impress me.

"Do you want to go upstairs?" he asked while cigar smoke swirled around our heads.

"Sure, but it's gonna' cost ya." I smiled a whiskey-induced smile, and was thrilled with his confusion.

"What do you mean? You're not making any sense."

"Okay, cowboy, let's go."

The saloon girls were hanging out on the balcony and the traffic in and out of the bedrooms was steady. My cowboy found an empty room and pulled me inside, closing the door behind me. I ignored the hoots and hollers from the other cowboys. I knew the whiskey was causing my brain to confuse fantasy and reality, but I didn't mind, because if I pretended I was someone else, what I had finally decided to do would be a whole lot easier.

I told the cowboy, "You're gonna' hafta' take off your guns, but I don't mind the boots."

"What the hell are you talking about? You're drunk. Give me that damn bottle." He took the whiskey bottle from my hand and set it on the nightstand, and then grabbed the quilt on the bed and threw it back with enthusiasm.

I looked down at the hardwood floors, and slowly swayed back and forth.

"Do you want the lights on or off?" the cowboy asked.

"Whatever you want, Sugar," I answered in a smooth, seductive voice.

"Alright, I'll turn 'em off."

I could hear him undressing in the pitch-black room, so I did the same. I heard his weight sink into the mattress, so I joined him. It was really over before it started. I felt his body roll on top of mine and his knee open my thighs, and I immediately felt a sharp pain, and then the sheets were wet under me. The whole act couldn't have taken more than thirty seconds. I don't know for sure what the hell happened, but I suspect the wetness on the sheets was a combination of blood and a way too eager cowboy.

I was glad that it was finally over, and before I passed out, I told him, "Leave the money on the nightstand, cowboy."



Three-toed Sloth

photograph

Dr. Robert Brodman



The Dream of a St. Louis Addict

Jean Monfort

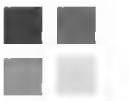
She drinks hot sauce like it's coffee,
And coffee like it's water—
Black water till ten at night.
Wears black shirts and red hats—
Cardinal's hats, and she loves them.
Works at the books, with an old woman
Affectionately aka'd "The Crazy Old Bat."
Has a gangsta sister,
And a small, furry dog that makes her voice squeak and speak in tongues,
Tongues only she understands.
She'd like to drink brandy in a crystal glass on a sun porch
While holding a cigarette, reading books with men named
Marius Thunderheart, who woo the vixenish Katherines.
Her voice will be low from the booze and the smoke,
And everyone will be "dahling."



Positive

Bridget Newman

Just because I would,
That doesn't mean I want to.
This is a fear I've never felt before.
This pain, it isn't physical.
It's not physical, yet, at least.
This hurts my heart.
My heart aches
For relief,
For an end to this,
This torture.
I don't have the patience for this,
This waiting.
I don't have the strength for this,
This burden.
I could tell you;
Doesn't mean I want to.
You and I are not invincible.
Some things are bigger than you and I.
We are not immune,
But for too long we've pretended to be.
For each other?
If not, than for who?
I know I'm often unlucky.
I'm never immune.
You have to tell me everything will be okay.
I'll believe it.
I need your strength today, your comfort.
I don't think I've ever needed you more than I do right now.
I wish you were here.
I'm so scared



(Positive, continued)

And weak
And alone.
How do I block this from my mind?
This pain—
It's just my heart
And my sense of right
And wrong.
I'm crippled by everything:
My youth,
My goals,
My family,
My friends,
My future,
My fear.
I am too crippled to think of anything,
Except my needs.
And I'm sorry.
But this is a choice I have to make.

I hope you are not the daughter I would've treated like a princess.
I hope you are not the son I would've played catch with in the backyard.
I hope you are the mistake I will not have to make.
I hope you are the pain that will go away if the answer is "negative."



Close to You

Dr. William Mottolese

With thanks to Burt Bacharach

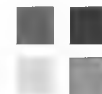
Last night making pizza,
my right hand balled against
the cold dough,
I longed
to be close to you,
but you sat
nursing your son and watching
a Kubrick biography
on HBO.
You were distant from me,
so joined with him
as if an exquisite thread latticed the space
around you in spun and phosphorescent silk.
Ten years ago
before we met, stirring spaghetti
with one hand
while the other held
the cob-end of a pot handle,
I discovered
my friend was dead.
I had wedged a phone
between my earlobe
and collarbone and turned
the new spaghetti in the pot until
it softened to mush,
then ate it
after I hung up.
Last night, thinking of soft pasta
while the cold dough opened
against my knuckles,
I longed to be
close to you.



10:26

Becky Scherer

I feel you creep up into me.
My eyes glaze over,
the voice at the front becomes monotonous,
my hand tingles,
and I begin to appease you.
I flip the page to reveal
blue and red lines—an intimidating
scene; nonetheless, I am not scared.
I know you will guide me.
I poise my hand above the page,
lower the instrument, kiss the tip
to the left hand flank, move it,
flirtingly, teasingly.
You become forceful, and I am pained until
I bleed ink once more.
Unconsciously it begins to move,
to glide between the lines;
I skim what I am creating
and notice it is my heart
set to words in spindly black ink.
There is no struggle, no itch;
it is not hard.



The Eyes

Lance Crow

Two eyes look down
at many looking up.
They brought the wine,
the spikes. He brought
the hands, the feet,
the tree. They took
life where he gave it.

The Case of the Fake I.D.: From the Casebook of Jay Miami, Private Eye

Professor John Rahe

SFX: Theme music

Announcer (1930's style): It's time for another exciting adventure from the casebook of Jay Miami, private eye. Today's episode: The Case of the Fake ID

SFX: Theme fade into office

Jay (*Narration*): It was Friday, March 18th, and it was late when I got back to the office. I had just come off a case that had required me to tail a guy through the sewer, shoot two thugs, beat up six people, and play Buttercup in a junior college production of H.M.S. Pinafore, so I was tired and ready to kick back with a tall scotch and a short blonde. I was headed for the door when the phone rang.

SFX: Phone ringing and being answered

Jay: This is Jay Miami, private eye. It's your nickel so make it fast.

Debbie: Oh Mr. Miami, I don't know what to do or where to go. I'm in real trouble and I don't know where to turn. You've got to help me, you've just got to. I'm desperate.

Jay: Oddly enough, I like that in a woman. You had better slow down sweetheart, you'll pull a muscle. Come on up to the office and we'll see what we can do.

(*Narration*) Ten minutes later there was a knock on the door and she came in. From the blond hair circling her face to the Vasque hiking boots under the rolled up cuffs of her Old Navy Cargo Pants, I knew that this kid had class. I offered her a chair. Cigarette?

Debbie: No thanks, I don't smoke. I think it is a filthy habit.

Jay: I hope you don't mind if I do.

Debbie: Well, yes, actually I do.

Jay: Tough.

SFX: Match being struck

Debbie: Well, I never!

Jay: Obviously, that's not true or you wouldn't be here. If you're through playing fresh air activist, maybe you can tell me why I'm here and not curled up with a good book and a bad girl, Miss ...

Debbie: Jarrett ... Debbie Jarrett. I'm in a real fix, Mr. Miami. I don't know where to go...you've got to help me, I don't know where else to turn. I...I'm so ashamed.

Jay: Don't sweat it, Miss Jarrett...I've seen it all. What's the problem?

Debbie: I . . . I . . . I've lost my I.D. card. I'm a sophomore at the College and without my card I'm lost. You can't get into the dorms late at night, you can't use the library, you can't use the gym, and worst of all, you can't get discounts at the local bars.

Jay: I know that. Why don't you just get another card?

Debbie: I can't. I'm a three time loser already. . . . If they catch me again, I lose my computer privileges. (Sobbing) I can't survive without text messaging and e-mail. . . . How will I know what my friends are doing? I won't keep track of my soaps. I have a term paper due on feminist elements of the works of August Strindberg. I'll . . . I'll be so alone.

Jay: I see.

Debbie: Then you'll help me?

Jay: I'll see what I can do. Go home, read "Miss Julie," and see what you're missing. I'll call you tomorrow.

SFX: Theme music up under narration

(Fake I.D., continued)

Jay (*Narration*): As I watched her walk out the door, I thought of all the kids just like her who had lost their ID's and didn't stand a chance after that. Once you lose your ID on a college campus you lose your identity and from there it's a short trip to drugs and prostitution. Well, this was one kid who wasn't going to become a statistic, not if Jay Miami could help it. It also didn't hurt that as she left the office I caught a glimpse of a red and blue tattoo on the small of her back which moved with her stride in a way that reminded me that I needed to wind my pendulum clock. My first move was to visit my old friend Charley O'Brien, head of security and traffic at the College. As a kid, I had pulled Charley out of the way of a VW mini-bus during a student riot in the 60's. He owed me a favor.

SFX: Local change and theme down

Charley (Irish accent): Well Jay, me boyo, what brings you out to God's country?

Jay: Strictly business, Charley. I need the inside dope on a stolen ID ring.

Charley: You got something we should know? You know the boys are still not happy with you and the way you made them look bad on that cafeteria food caper. How did you figure that the hamburger patties were really brillo pads?

Jay: It was simple Charley . . . Hamburger patties don't foam when you drop them in water. Don't blame me because the boys can't find their butts with both hands. What can you tell me about the fake ID racket?

Charley: Not much to tell. We know there's been a rash of ID thefts, mostly from coeds who are second or third time losers. They wait until the girls are distracted or go the restroom and then move in for the heist. The girls come back and the goods are gone. We've had men staked out at the parties, but so far we've drawn a blank and a lot of really offended looks for the ones hanging out around the restrooms. Look, Jay, if you come up with something, let us know, OK? We're getting nowhere fast and there's pressure from the top. The only people happy with this are the thieves, and besides, tonight's my night for restroom duty.

Jay: Well, that explains why you're wearing the dress. If I find anything, I'll let you know, but I have two suggestions.



Charley: What's that?

Jay: Concentrate your search on the north side, that's where this stuff normally happens.

Charley: Right. What's the second suggestion?

Jay: Get a darker colored skirt . . . that one makes your hips look wide.

Charley: Got it. Thanks, Jay

Jay: It's what I do. I'll be in touch.

SFX: Theme up for change of locale

Jay (Narration): That night found me out on the town with Debbie, retracing her steps from the night before.

SFX: Bar music

Debbie: This is the last place we went to that night. If we don't find something here I don't know what we'll do.

Jay (Narration): The place was called Bennie's and while the neighborhood couldn't be called bad, it wasn't for lack of effort. Bennie's was the kind of place that had been around since college kids had decided that college wasn't just for reading books, and while the crowd was young, their intentions were as old as time. One glance showed couples sitting in booths or tables trying to talk over the blaring music. On the dance floor in one corner other couples twisted and gyrated to the primitive beat while at the bar groups of two or three young men seemed to be scoping out the scantily clad young women, like a nature documentary on the Serengeti Plain. It was a loud and decadent scene, but it was my part of town.

Debbie: Over there! That man at the bar. He was here last night. I remember because he asked me if I was in school and if I'd like to take a ride in a big car.

(Fake I.D., continued)

Jay: Baby, that's no man, that's a parasite called Wally DaStinko. Yeah, Wally DaStinko, King of the fake ID pushers. I thought he was doing a dime in Leavenworth for selling fake Library of Congress cards to underage kids. Wait here, I'll be right back.

SFX: Walking

Jay: Hello, Wally, still looking to improve your life through better Xeroxing?

Wally: Miami? What do you (SFX: Struggle) Owwww my arm. Let me go Miami. You got nothing on me.

Jay: Listen punk, whenever a piece of slime like you tries to pull a gun on me, I got enough on you to make it look like you're dressing for prom.

Wally: Let go of my arm. You're breaking it.

Jay: You tell me what I want to know or I'll break this arm and then tell the folks downtown that I saw you handing out fake rubber entrance stamps to minors.

Wally: You can't do that Miami. They find out downtown and I'm back in the slammer. I can't take that again. . . . I'm delicate.

Jay: Let's step out back and talk about it.

SFX: (Out to the alley)

Jay: So spill. What do you know about stolen IDs?

Wally: I hear there's a new guy in town from down south. The heat got to him and he came up here. He swears he's going to run all of the fake ID action in the state. All I know about him is that he's really dangerous. When he's around the body count goes up like the last scene of Hamlet.

Jay: What's his name?



Wally: Salvatore Boston, but the guys call him "The Cutter."

Jay: He likes to use a knife, eh?

Wally: Yeah . . . that and a flatulence problem when he was a kid. It kept him out of Yale and he never forgot it. You don't fart around with Yale.

Jay: Where's he located?

Wally: I don't know . . . look, a couple of his guys usually come in here at 11:00. That's all I know. Honest!

Jay: When they come in, point them out. Here comes the girl ... keep it clean.

Debbie: Have you found anything?

Jay: Maybe. Look kid, here's five bucks. Go home and I might have something for you tomorrow.

Debbie: Well, alright, but please . . . be careful.

Jay: Baby, I'm always careful.

Wally: There's The Cutter's boys now.

Jay: Thanks. Keep clean, Wally, or I'll be back as certain as midgets on Mexican TV.

SFX: Walking

Jay: OK boys, take me to Boston.

Thug #1: Sorry guy, we don't swing that way. Not that that's a bad thing and we are flattered and everything, but man, it's like two guys can't go into a bar for a drink these days without everyone thinking they're choosing china patterns. I blame the media.

(Fake I.D., continued)

Jay: Shut up! I mean take me to The Cutter.

Thug #1: Oh. So, what if we don't?

Jay: Then I'll make your faces look like the inside of a bean bag chair.

Thug #1: Tough guy, huh?

Jay: I'll do.

Thug #2: Look out! He's got a gun.

Jay: You must be the one that went to school. Now take me to Cutter. You start, smart boy, and if you call that, it will probably follow you.

SFX: Theme music up

Jay (Narration): We left Bennies and headed into the city. The two goons took me to an abandoned warehouse on a back street. We went in, and I had just enough time to see a row of neatly stacked boxes when a Buick hit me on the back of my head.

Thug #1: Get him, Lennie!

SFX: Struggle, blow to the head, groan, and falling body

Jay (narration): I saw a flash of color not unlike the aurora borealis and then it all went black. When I started to wake up, I felt the room start to spin like the tilt-a-whirl at a four H carnival. When the room settled down, I saw that I was in an office. There was a desk, a file cabinet, and a clock on the wall that read 2:30 next to one of those paintings of running horses painted on velvet that you buy on street corners from guys in trucks with Mexican license plates. As I looked around the room, I spotted one more thing . . . a red head in a lime green sweater. She had a couple of 38's aimed in my direction . . . she also had a gun.

Well, baby, either I've died and gone to heaven or you're here to give me something to live for.



Zelda: Tough guy, huh? I like tough guys. Maybe we can see just how tough you are a little later.

Jay: Maybe when I come back to life we can explore the possibilities, but for now I'll settle for where I am. Where is that, by the way?

Zelda: You're in The Cutter's office. You were slow to wake up, so he stepped out for a moment and left me to watch you. You're cute to watch and you mumble in your sleep. Just who is Charley, and why is he wearing a dress?

Jay: Never mind. I'm feeling better. Maybe you'd like to explore the possibilities now.

Zelda: No thanks. You're nice to look at, but I bet you bite.

Jay: Yeah, but not enough to leave a mark. How about a drink....my head's killing me.

Zelda: Sure. It's right here on the desk . . . come and pour it for yourself.

SFX: Footsteps

Jay: OK. So, tell me about yourself. What's your name, where did you come from, if you had it all to do over again would you marry your high school sweetheart and live happily ever after?

Zelda: My name's Zelda. Yeah, I know. It's a family name.

Jay: Your family is named Zelda?

Zelda: Every one of them. It gets really confusing when we pass out presents at Christmas.

Jay: I can imagine. You want one of these?

Zelda: Why not?

SFX: Pouring a drink



(Fake I.D., continued)

Jay: Here.

Zelda: Thanks.

SFX: Struggle

Jay: That's it baby. Give the gun to poppa.

Zelda: You rat. You can't get away. . . . The Cutter has the place full of goons.

Jay: Relax, Precious. Just sit there and be good, and maybe I'll let you take a ride in a nice police car.

Zelda: You got nothing on me. You Shamus's are all alike. You see someone making a few bucks off some dumb college bimbos and you get all mushy inside. Well, you can't pin this one on me. It was Boston and the boys, they did it! I just followed orders. I was getting out . . . it was getting really weird. There were the ugliest women starting to hang around in the restroom of the college bars. One of them had an Irish accent and asked me if I liked Gladiator movies. I'm glad you caught me, glad I tell you! (Starts sobbing)

Jay: Dry em up, sweetheart. Oh, you're good kid, really good. You lie like a champ, but I've seen the best. I used to work for network television. Just sit there nice and quiet and let's wait for The Cutter.

SFX: Door opening

Cutter: I fear you won't have long to wait.

Jay: So, you're The Cutter. Well, you and those goons just stay where you are. I'm calling the cops.

Cutter: Before you do, I have a proposition for you.



Jay: Sorry, I don't swing that way. Not that that's a bad thing. I'm really flattered and everything and some of my best friends are . . .

Cutter: No sir . . . a business proposition.

Jay: Go ahead . . . a couple more minutes won't matter where you're going.

Cutter: You know, I've heard a lot about you, Miami. The smart guys said that you were the only one who could stand in my way. Well, I've got a deal for you. Interested?

Jay: Keep talking.

Cutter: Between the two of us we could run this state. First the major universities, then the small private institutions. Then we go for the junior colleges and the trade schools and finally the large high schools and barber colleges. Half of that could be yours. What do you say, Miami? If you're worried about the moral end, well, we're just supplying a need. People want these things and they don't get them from us, it will be from someone else. From us they get the best, not some made up drivers license purchased from a sleazy back alley copying machine. Don't you see Miami, we're offering a service. A service which pays nicely.

Jay: No thanks. It might not bother you, thinking of all of those kids whose identities you've stolen, but I couldn't sleep at night thinking of all the teen-age alcoholics who started with your stolen ID's. I would lay awake nights thinking about how you corrupted honest foreign exchange students who bought your fake driver's licenses instead of taking the course and being legit. No, Boston, thanks, but no thanks. Now put you hands in the air while I make that call.

Cutter: That's too bad, Miami . . . we'd have a made a great team. Get him, boys!

Jay: Don't try it, Boston.

SFX: Five gunshots and falling bodies.

Jay: That takes care of your boys . . . don't you be next.



(Fake I.D., continued)

Cutter: I don't think so, Miami. That's a Bertinelli five shot revolver and you're out of bullets . . . and time.

SFX: Sound of a switchblade opening

Cutter: I'm going to show you why they call me "The Cutter."

Jay: Now that's just rude.

Cutter: No, I meant the knife.

Jay: Oh.

SX: Sound of advancing footsteps

Jay (Narration): He came at me with the knife and made a thrust in the general direction of my fourth rib, but my rib wasn't there anymore. I twisted, grabbed his wrist and threw him over my shoulder with a ju-jitsu flip. I grabbed the knife, but Zelda attached herself to my arm with her teeth. As I shook her off, Boston grabbed one of the fallen goon's guns.

Cutter: Take this, Miami!

Jay (Narration): I grabbed Zelda and pulled her in front of me.

SFX: Gun shot

Zelda: Cutter . . . you . . . you.

SFX: Body dropping to floor

Cutter: I shot Zelda. You rat, you made me shoot Zelda. There's one left for you. Say goodbye, Miami.



Jay: Not this time, Boston.

SFX: Sound of a knife being thrown and striking body

Cutter: Ahhhhhhhh!

SFX: Body falling

Jay (Narration): I looked down at the body where six inches of stainless steel blade seemed to be growing out of the Cutters chest. I lit a Lucky and called the cops.

SFX: Theme music

Jay (Narration): It was late when I got back to the office. It was raining and I felt lousy. I had just fired up a butt and poured me a stiff belt from the bottle in the desk when there was a knock on the door. It opened and in walked Debbie Jarrett.....but this was a different Debbie than I'd seen before. This Debbie was dressed to kill and looked all grown up.

SFX: Desk drawer opens and a package hits the desk top

Jay: Here's your stuff, kid.

Debbie: I don't know how to thank you. You've saved my life. I was on the way to a party and saw your lights. I thought maybe we could stop by the party, then go to my place for drinks and . . . some talk.

Jay: Listen, baby, how old are you?

Debbie: 25. I took some time off from school to tour the country as an exotic dancer before going to college. What do you say to my place, Mr. Miami?

Jay: Sounds great to me . . . and call me Jay. I didn't ask for her ID either. End of case.

Debbie: Are you ready, Jay?



(Fake I.D., continued)

SFX: Theme up

Jay: Baby, I was born ready.

Announcer: This has been another adventure from the casebook of Jay Miami, Private Eye. Join us next week when Jay tackles another action packed adventure in, The Case of the Rampaging Registrar.

THE END



Ann

Angela Williams

Ann waters her houseplants every third day.
She listens to jazz with the lights off
To dull the constant noise of the family next door,
Wishing always that she were musically inclined.
Tonight, after cooking dinner for one
She undresses and stands nude
In front of the drawn blinds of the windows
In the unlit living room of her fourteenth floor apartment.
She wishes her name were Annalisa or Annabelle
Or something fabulous and melodic,
That she might open her eyes to see someone
Looking back at her from the complex across Massachusetts Avenue.
She turns the lights on, merely naked and alone.
She goes to bed and dreams of someone else's life.



The Violin & Bow

Ami Tuft

You drew your fingers
like the bow of a violin that
hummed across my lips.
We fit like a musician and an instrument.
You, the musician, whose bow orchestrates
the strings to evoke an intimate vibration,
and I, the instrument, who unleashes
the music of my heart
when moved by the musician.
I felt my soul revolving:
taut, sloping notes,
measure rising,
your fingers singing,
scribing a sensuous movement
composed against my flesh,
punctuated with a staccato of sighs.
My heart has a fiber your fingertips
understand, crystallizing my
colorful and poetic notes of
our midnight masterpiece.



Walking Down the Oncology Ward at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago

Susan Huss

Screaming Children to my left and right,
Cold white floors and walls surround me,
Tap, tap, tapping of doctor's heels
Pound in my head for days afterwards.
Masks to protect the immuno-deficient;
A cold means death to the
Hairless heads around me.
Wondering if they'll see another day,
I feel guilt for surviving.



And Peace Becomes Him

Renee Pugh

He quietly padded over to the candle lit,
and with one swift breath, extinguished it.
Then, with equal serenity, he pawed his way back to his bed,
And there on his feathery pillow, he laid his pretty head.
When his eyes had closed, an angel appeared at his side,
So that she may carry his spirit when his body had died.



To Be a Lion

Dr. Mark R. Seely

Alienation: the discovery that
I am defined externally, that I am
exactly the many parts
I play and nothing more. Uniqueness is in
the temporal blending of my various
roles. Stability is a
function of memory and
habit—consistent patterns in my actions
and incessantly repeated themes in my
thought. But I am a bubble,
an empty vessel filled with
ambient experience, overflowing
and continually replenished. The sound
of my own voice against the inside of my
skull, my vision, my skin: the
tenuous elastic boundaries of self
that wax and wane, expand and contract as my
attention is channeled by circumstance. My
birth adds nothing that was not
always. My death takes nothing away.

And yet I cling to the illusion as if
my life depended on it.

I once read a story of a Buddhist nun
who built her own funeral pyre and placed a
wooden chair in the center.
She sat peacefully until the flames swallowed
her legs and chest, at which point
she bellowed a single powerful roar—she
was a lion with molten skin. And then she
was a mediocre pile of blackened bones.



Napping

Anthony G. Salati

I remember screaming before waking,
she was there—
smelling like rain and stone.



Soiled

Angela Williams

This rug's finer days are long past.
In 1991 its white lines stood out
Magnificently,
Contrasting with the quadrilaterals and triangles
Of stone-washed charcoal fabric.

Many pairs of feet
Have trampled, pitter-pattered, stomped, stormed,
Lighted, sprinted, jumped across the dirty rug,
It becoming all the more dirty,
Its whiteness fading to a dingy, dirty-water gray.

Fuzz and dust pills are scattered fashionably,
They seem to never pick up when vacuumed.
The dirty rug holds its own,
Shifting always somewhere around the center
Of the living room floor.

The dirty rug has been soiled over time
It has been ignored by the many, many feet
That make contact with it.
The dirty rug knows much about us,
If a rug can know anything at all.



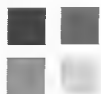
Shot from the Hip

photographs

Professor Mary Dahl

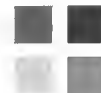






(Shot from the Hip, continued)





Personal Gnostic

Dr. Gerald Powell

I commit myself to the highest order of non being—to live without the comforts of language.

*

Novels, films, and poems are incessant reminders of how capable I really am. I admire the Artists, for their critique lacks effulgence—it's brutal, vile and forthright.

*

Naivete affords most salvation.

*

What lies beyond a metaphysical, existential, and theological center? A center not by perspective, but a center where everything is held together: sin, gravity, death, and birth.



The Penitent

Professor Maia Kingman

When I was fourteen, I left my family to find God.
I was hot-blooded. I was clouded by visions
of darkness.

A fever, like dust, rose from the ground where I walked
and enveloped me. It shortened my vision. I burned, hounded
by a guilty conscience.

I entered the brotherhood in
a fit of torment.
I wept and I prayed.

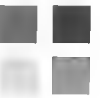
Twice weekly Brother Lawrence called us to sing
Quem quaeritis—
Who are you looking for—

Oh! the torment as my unworthy voice was rent from me
to join those voices—like angels—rising. Mine
rose with them, a tremulous apology.

Brother Lawrence, palm open, outward,
—the Guidonian hand—
pointed to what was penned there, knuckles as notes, and I followed, up and down
and up again,
the flesh and the will and the hunger for God,
united in ink on fleshy palm and warm breath resonating.
Twenty penitents' voices down and up and down and up again
until,
in polyphony, prayer cleaved a path to heaven.

I took in air and I expelled it.

I stood
in the chancel and sang

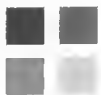


Color Wheel Composition

acrylic

Natalie Salinas





Canticle of the Sun

Lance Crow

*For that which was dead
lives, and that which lives
may no longer perish.*

i.

That rides upon the backs
of green, vein-split leaves,
emblazoning treetops to reflect
green-gold, boldly
above ample acres, blank blue;
below white wisps form
migratory shadows from
evaporating dewdrops
on morn-lit lawns where
walking silhouettes slither
down porch steps to
fetch the daily news.

ii.

That shadows folds on the faces
of a thousand elderly women and
men on the beaches of
southern eastern Florida, wherein
hide lost memories of youth
and found memories of tanning
oil; grandchildren present
in absence as the trickle of outdated
photographs struggles through
communication's parched canal, blighted
by distance between brilliant heathered
dawn and the glistening skin stretched
across the Atlantic's surface.



iii.

Around which we pronate, as a
wrist serving a tennis ball,
the mechanics of the mind of
Nature; that star whose element
producing fission serves not only as
a source of light, but as the stoker
of furnaces, the metallurgist to which
bronze and iron ages bowed, the alchemist
who makes Pb yield Au, the farmer who
vitalizes from dirt brown, lush green
swathes of land, bearding the earth,
a growth lovely and seemingly
irregular, which we cannot comprehend.

iv.

Whose spotted belt disrupted
the *kosmos* for millions, as minds
melded from perigee to perihelion;
the stone Galileo dropped from
now leaning Pisa, falls constant,
to crown those immovable human
heads lodged in the crystalline heavens,
causing irreparable damage, shattering
stained glass that had for so long
been their eyes.



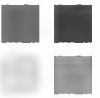
(*Canticle*, continued)

v.

Whose form floods half of Earth, always,
with energy no amount of sandbags stacked
to infinity can ever suppress; the flood
that makes dews mists, mists
cumulus, gorged cumulus yield thunder-
blackened skies where lightning cackles,
streaking, as if the monstrous, grey,
saturated cotton balls, stories and stories
high, are safehouses, and it, a naked child,
fleet of foot, in a game it knows it has won.

vi.

That silent sentient whose heat
can be heard in a sand-wind
sailing through the Sahara, playing
notes no pipe could pitch with
whisper-light touch and a grace
only God understands; its distance
felt in that same Sahara under a crown
of starlight where men must navigate a
land raised to face the brilliant
entity whose force sundered the seas
to show now desolate dunes.



vii.

Beneath which men swear oaths,
placate idols and tongue wounds
which luxury afford and
implicate a meaningful arrangement of objects,
as we stand in immaculate
white underwear, hiding that which
is 'private', whose iridescent aura
joins truncated legs with a torso
and its accessories, into a confusing form
which *can* toothpick or t, but *must*
suddenly sprawl
into a crime scene drawing where
a bag-eye detective squints, scratching the furrow
on his forehead for an explanation; yet, no light
from above can explain that blotted,
chalky outline.



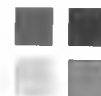
The Letter

Sarah Bozenda

I got a letter in the mail,
Opened the flood gates of emotion,
Brought back memories long forgotten,
Feelings that I've missed

I got a letter in the mail,
Its been so long since I've heard,
I thought I was forgotten,
My hopes of love are re-ignited

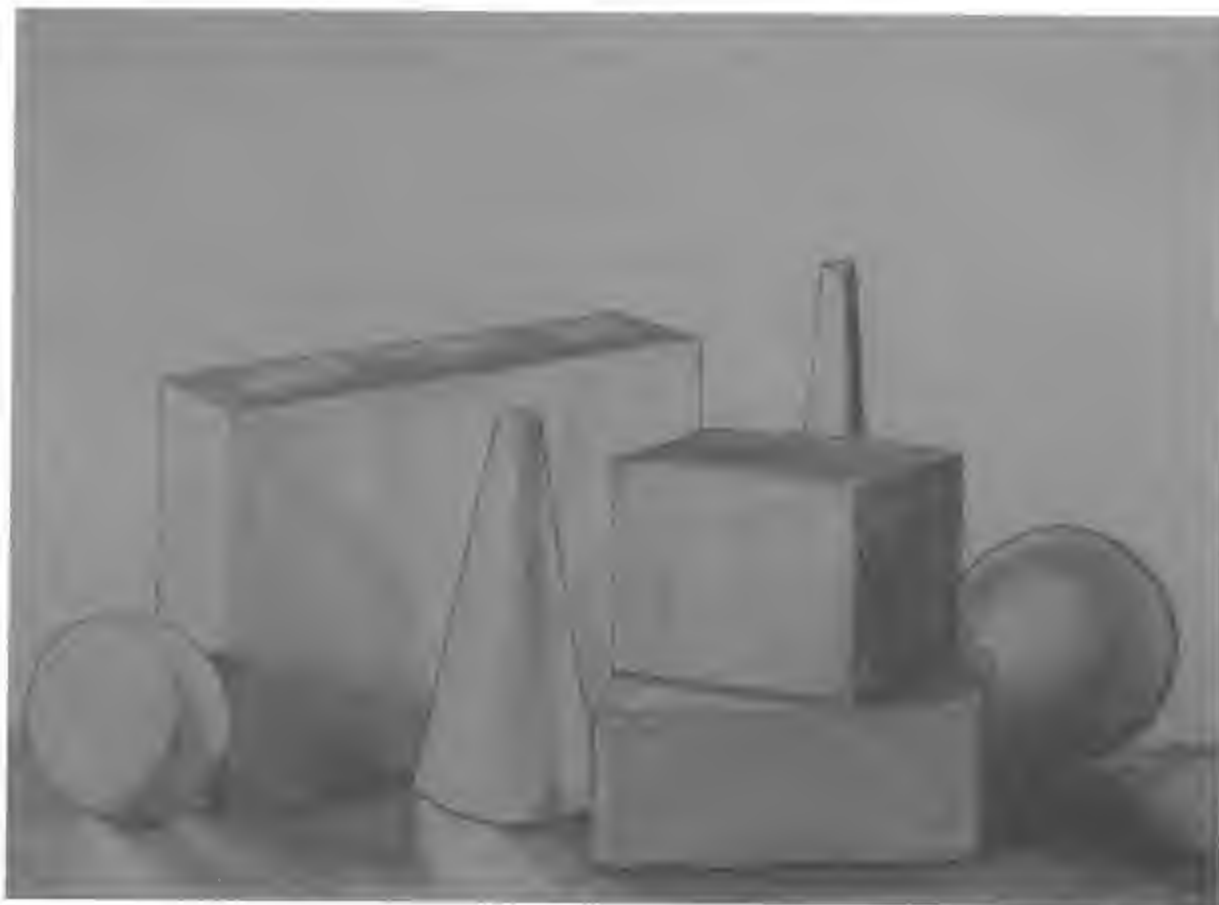
I got a letter in the mail,
The love is real,
There is no mistake,
Its addressed to me,
Occupant.



Still Life Drawing

pencil

Alexis Tepavceвич





Novel

Becky Scherer

I wish I could capture
the ease and familiarity
you've given me in a
butterfly net, then
bottle them for the Tuesday
after you're gone.
But mostly I just want to
remember this feeling in my heart,
to write it down in words and
tuck it into a flower print
hat box with a silk ribbon and
read it on the Tuesday
after you're gone.

A Vicious Circle

Aaron Van Natta

Today I was awakened by “We Can Work It Out,” by The Beatles. I lay in my bed, knowing it had to have snowed last night, and school has been canceled. I stay tightly wrapped in my bed sheets, because my house is poorly heated and it is the beginning of winter. I hear a knock at my bedroom door.

“Aaron, hun, get up and get ready for school.” It is my mom. She works at Quality Grocery with my dad, who runs the store. My dad is basically the owner of the store. Actually, my grandma owns it, but my dad does everything. The grocery store has been in my family for over eighty-five years. Anyway, I get up and rush over and get my clothes from the dresser, because it is freezing. I glanced outside and there is not a flake of snow on the ground. It is just my luck. As I start to head downstairs, I see my White Sox baseball bat on the red carpet in my brother’s room. There is not much in my brother’s room anymore, because he lives in New York and attends film school there. I am sitting in my favorite red chair and watching ESPN, waiting for my friend Scott, to pick me up for school. I hear his horn honk and I go out and get in his red jeep, which goes nicely with the green grass. It is almost like Christmas but with no damn snow.

“Hey. What’s up?” Scott asks.

“Nothing much. Too bad it didn’t snow,” I reply.

He gives Andrew and me a ride to school everyday. Scott lives on a farm. His house is awesome. He has a huge yard, where we played sports as kids. We still do, but for the most part we drive his go-kart around the yard. Scott’s father is a farmer, so they have a barn on their property. Instead of holding farm equipment in the barn, it has a half-basketball court in it. It is pretty new, and that is all the barn is used for. His mother is a Certified Public Accountant for a firm in town. Scott is one of the better athletes in our school, and is the smartest kid in my grade.

We arrive at Andrew’s house. “About time you guys show up,” says Andrew, in greeting.

Scott answers, “Yeah, I had to wait for my brother because he was taking his sweet time this morning. Right, Sleth?” Sleth is what we call him because he is lazy and never gets off his butt. It was originally “Sloth” but his little sister would say “Sleth,” so now we do too.

My friend Andrew lives pretty close to me, in town in a big yellow house on a hill. His father is an insurance agent for his grandpa’s insurance office. His mother also works in the hospital.

Once we got to school, we saw Steve in the parking lot and went over to talk to him. Steve is the son of our school district’s superintendent, and his mother is a sixth

(Circle, continued)

grade history teacher. They just moved back to town after his father got the job offer. Before they moved away, his father was the middle school principal.

"Hey, guys. Where are your sweatpants? Remember it is Sweatpants Wednesday?" asks Steve.

"Ah, man I forgot!" Andrew says, disgusted.


"Great, now I am going to be the only one who looks like a scurby," replies Steve. "Scurby" is a term my friends use to describe white trash, dirty, or poor people. Scott, Andrew, and Steve have been my friends for longest time. I have been hanging out with them since preschool. They degrade others based on class. It is not just them, though. The people my friends consider scurbies also make fun of them. They call Scott prep and say crap to him about how they will kick his ass. Most of the time, it is just directed to Scott, because Andrew and Steve are just considered goof-offs by everyone.

I went to my first class of the day. It is history class, which is always freezing because it has no heat. The room is covered with pictures of presidents and the shelves are filled with war books. This is where I meet Tim and Barry, who are my good friends. We hang out all the time after school. We usually go to Barry's and watch movies or play video games. Barry's house is one story and being remodeled all the time by his father. His house has a great basement because it is huge and his father has a 57 inch widescreen television with surround sound. His dad works for Wal-Mart. He goes to sites where Wal-Mart is building new stores and oversees the project. Barry's mother was an assistant teacher, but now she helps our friend Tim's mother with her painting business. Tim has been a friend of mine since around sixth or seventh grade. His father is a seventh and eighth grade science teacher at the middle school. His mother, as mentioned before, owns her own painting business. His parents are all about working. Tim always has projects to do around the house before he can go out with us.

"Hey, Jerry and Tim. What's up?" Jerry is our nickname for Barry.

Tim replies, "Nothing much. We were just talking about how we feel like playing Scurby World Series." Yes, this group of friends also uses terms for others to degrade them. In this case, "Scurby" is used to describe the game we play. It is just homerun derby but it is in Tim's front yard with a T-ball bat, tennis balls, and a tree line as a fence. Until now, I never realized how brutal we were with some of our comments.

I reply, "Yeah that sounds fun. What I really want to do is play some football. Man, I was praying for snow today. I could really use a day off. Plus, if it did snow I was thinking of getting the snow football league together to play."



I love to play football in the snow. There is nothing better, although a rainy and muddy field is good, too. Our teacher was in front of class teaching his normal boring history lesson, and that is when it happened. Jerry tapped on my shoulder and told me to look outside. I turned around and it looked like the blizzard of all blizzards had come. It was one of the greatest sights I had ever seen.

My next three classes went by and we were not out of school yet. The snow had let up a lot. Yet, still I had hope because they had to serve everyone lunch. So maybe they're just waiting to serve all the meals. Finally, the bell rang and I sprinted to lunch to get in line before the physical education class got there. I sat at the lunch table, which both sets of my friends sit at to eat. As I sat down, Steve and Andrew were on a rant with the girls about women in sports.

"Oh yeah, right. I could beat any girl on the basketball team and I don't even play," I heard Andrew say.

"Yeah, even Jerry could beat the best girl and he is barely a guy," Steve says, laughing.

"Screw you," Barry replies. It started to snow again, and we saw Steve's father driving his car in the snow, testing out how much traction there was. Before lunch was over, our conversation turned into a discussion about the people in school.

"Hey don't mess with the cool people," Andrew says sarcastically. "That's how our school is split. We have the cool people behind us. Us the weird guys and..." Andrew stands up and motions at the rest of the cafeteria. "The scurbies."

While laughing Steve says, "Yeah, someday they are going to have a scurby revolution."

"Yeah and Van Natta is the first to go. He lives right by the scurby line," replies Andrew. The scurby line is the train tracks.

"Yeah, and if they did, they couldn't win, because they are too stupid to form an alliance," Scott states.

Barry adds, "They won't take me I'm behind enemy lines, but I got guns."

"Shut up Jerry. You are a scurby," Scott states.

"Hey you can go to hell Scott," Barry says angrily.

In the next class after lunch, the principal's voice came over the intercom and said that school would be dismissed in five minutes due to the snow. Before we got into Scott's red jeep, we talked with everyone and told them to meet us at the football field in thirty minutes. As we walked through the parking lot, I noticed the division of people in our school. I feel class is the main basis of the split in my school. Usually,



(Circle, continued)

each gang of friends who hung out with each other was basically among the same class, money-wise.

After Scott dropped me off at my house, I went inside to call Terry to see if he would play some football. Then I got dressed in my football gear. I wear long underwear with sweatpants and jeans over them. Then, I put on two to three t-shirts and two sweatshirts over those and I am ready to go. When I get downstairs, I see my red Buccaneers jersey, and throw it on for the full football effect. I got in my car and drove to pick up Terry.

As I turn on to Terry's road I can see his house, which is now covered in a new coat of snow. His yard looks as if there are many hills of different size, but I know that it is just the cars, bikes, lawn mowers, and go-kart parts. Terry comes out of the house and is walking to the car. He is in his same Bears coat that he has had for ages and a pair of jeans. Terry's mother yells at him to be back by dark to help with the paper route. Terry's father delivers papers and mows yards for his job, although I doubt he will be mowing yards anytime soon. His mother works for my dad at the grocery store. She is the head cook in the deli. Terry and I have been friends since third grade. It is sort of strange that we are friends, because before we were friends at school we used to call each other names. Of course it was second grade, but I would call him an idiot and things, and he would call me rich boy and other names. Then, in third grade, we were in a speech class together and we ended up becoming great friends. Yet, something as little a friendly football game could end this friendship.

Finally, we got to the football field, and we were ready to play some football. The field looked perfect. It was covered in three inches of snow and it was still snowing. It is the most perfect weather in the world. To the hell with California! I like my winter weather! The snow puts me in a peaceful state of mind.

Tensions arise in a football game, which can start feuds, but they usually only last the length of the game. This time, I believe, would have been no different, except for the build-up of many old tensions, like a dislike of each others' friends, which were not related to the football game.

We divided our teams up, and it was five on five. As we started, I was getting warmer because we were moving around so much. Usually, the game starts out normal and becomes aggressive during the second half, but today was different. I noticed during the fourth play of the game, Terry was going to catch the ball and Andrew absolutely destroyed him. He fell to the ground hard and got up slowly.

"Damn, my hands are freezing," Terry says as his hand turn red.

"Hey where are your gloves, anyway?" Andrew says as he helps Terry up.

"He has them on, it's just they got so many holes in them," Steve says laughing.

I can tell Terry did not like that comment, but he kept it to himself. The game went on and tensions mounted. Barry just kept making fun of Scott and telling him how he hated him. Terry finally got fed up and started calling Scott prep. He was in a cussing mood, too. So far, Terry had dropped the three balls thrown to him and he had been burned on defense twice. Then Andrew caught a ball over Terry for a touchdown.

"You can't stop me, bitch. You got nothing on me," Andrew says, while standing over Terry in the end-zone.

"Get off me, you fucking dick," Terry said as he pushed Andrew away so he could get up.

"Hey, if you can't take a little punishment, then go home and deliver some papers," Andrew says, trying to put Terry down.

Terry gets to his feet and throws a punch, but misses. They tackle each other onto the ground. I ran over and broke it up quickly, and told them to calm down and just play football. We started playing again. The snow had stopped falling and the sky was now getting darker. We decided to end the game, and said that the next touchdown wins. Scott dropped back in the pocket, and threw a bomb to Andrew. He caught it and just as he started to run, Terry collided with him and it looked like he put his elbow to Andrew's chin. The ball dropped to the ground and everyone ran for it. Terry was closest and he picked it up and started running for the end-zone. He dodged and weaved like he was on a hell bent mission to score the touchdown. After he got past Steve he was home free and the game was over.

As Terry enters the end-zone he turned and pointed and yelled, "Fuck all ya!" and started walking away.

The game was over, and I was ready to leave. We went over to help Andrew up, but he got up by himself. He had a bloody nose, and his hand was now red.

"Hey, where you going you fucking scurb!" Andrew yelled. "I'm going to rip you apart."

"That was perfectly legal so you should stop bitching," Terry said.

Andrew angrily replies, "Actually I am pretty sure elbowing isn't that legal, but if you want you could sue me for when I am finished with you! Wait a second, you probably will!"

"That's it-you are going down, bitch!" Terry yells.

They ran at each other and started throwing punches and landing a lot of them. I went to break it up, but Terry punched me. I fell to the ground and just laid there. I looked up as the sun set behind the clouds, and the sky turned red and bled.



Locality

Becky Scherer

What would I have been doing
during your crucifixion?
Watching? weeping? waiting?
Would I have been standing on the sidelines
bearing witness to the execution of a prophet?
I wonder if I could have found the courage
to hand you a towel or wipe your brow myself.
Maybe I would have cried out for you
and avoided your stare as you dragged
yourself past me,
your hands occupied,
busy carrying your burden and mine.



Indian Painted Rocks

Dr. Mark R. Seely

There is a foot trail along the Little Spokane River just a few miles north of town. During the day it's populated by senior citizens—the more active ones—communing with nature while they can still enjoy her more pleasant accouterments, before she shows them her true despoiling ugliness: the painful relentless decay that ends in the grave. During the evenings it is populated by teenage punks drinking beer and having sex on the moss that grows in thick emerald mats along the bank.

At the trail head there is a monument of sorts, a basalt overhang covered with prehistoric graffiti called *Indian Painted Rocks*. It's really not all that impressive, as petroglyphs go. Some white squiggles and a stick figure or two that look like something a three year old might scratch in crayon on her bedroom wall. The county put an iron fence around the site to prevent spontaneous editing. A plaque on the fence says that the mysterious markings are several thousand years old, and then speculates on their purpose and meaning.

Ask any three-year-old and she'll tell you the meaning is in the creative act itself. There's no significance beyond the moment. Besides, mom is just going to paint it over as soon as she finds out.

I was walking along the trail with Esther one day when a rattlesnake slipped across the moss and stretched itself in front of us like a line in the sand drawn by a schoolyard bully. Esther and I stopped to consider our options. As far as I was concerned, there was really only one option worth pursuing: turn around and calmly—but very, very rapidly—go back the way we came. Esther suggested that we forego the “calmly” part and run like hell. But before we could put our plan into action, two young boys came running down the trail toward us from the other side of the snake. I yelled for them to stop, but only one of them heard. The other ran right across the snake, nearly stepping on its head, and then stopped to see why his companion was no longer following. His companion stood absolutely still—not even daring to blink, breathing through osmosis—less than ten feet from the snake, which had by now wrapped itself into and angry coil.

The four of us (five counting the snake) stood dumbly for a several moments. Each one of our brains had become a congressional committee bogged down in partisan quibbling with no sign of resolution.

Then, as if by an executive order, a short stocky gray-haired man with leathery skin wrinkled in tight strands around his neck pushed his way past us carrying a long stick. He looked like he had just walked off the set of a television western from the sixties, stopping home long enough to change out of his beaver moccasins and buckskin vest and into a pair of Reeboks and a florescent magenta nylon jogging suit. He



(Rocks, continued)

approached the snake as if it was a dozen empty beer cans piled in the center of the path, slapped the snake's head against the ground, and held it there with the stick. He looked at me and asked me what I wanted him to do with it.

"What? What do you mean?"

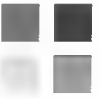
"Do you want me to kill it?" He replied. Why was he asking me?

"Is that necessary?" I asked. I was buying time while I tried to sort things out. Was he serious? How did he plan on killing it? How would he manage to not kill it and get away safely? Again, why was he asking me?

"No. I would prefer not to kill it if I don't have to," he said like John Wayne trying to play the part of a half-breed Indian chief, his skin painted with the reddish pigment white actors used to wear before it was discovered that real Indians can act too, although their natural pigment is nowhere near as menacing.

"He hasn't hurt anybody," I offered in the snake's behalf. With that, the man hooked the stick under the venomous serpent and flipped it into the air toward the river. The snake kinked, twisted, and performed various midair contortions, and finally splashed a full-length belly-flop then disappeared beneath the surface. In a few seconds its head reemerged and trailed a wake toward the far shore.

The committee voted to adjourn, and a short while later I was standing next to the iron fence reading the plaque and wondering what the artist—or author (or prehistoric accountant?)—would have thought about having his work on permanent display. There is something bittersweet about posthumous fame. And then, an image: some future millennia, and a plaque-adorned iron fence around the time-stained remnants of a freeway overpass.



The Boar's Hairbrush and Other Things

Jean Monfort

The boar's hair brush was in the second left hand drawer in the bathroom
Tucked neatly next to the pink hair rollers and old Kleenex
It was small and worn.

Grandma always kept a Kleenex tucked neatly into her sleeve.
She reused them
A sign she was a child of the depression.

She made me so much gnocci one time
I cried "Please Grandma! No more gnocci!"
So she put more in a box and sent it home with me so I could eat it there.

She grew her own mint and tomatoes,
Sometimes she'd bring the green ones in and wrap them in newspaper,
Leaving them to redden on her tool table.

Grandma's bathroom was pink,
Pink soaps, pink fuzzy bath mat, pink bathtub slip-preventer
And a tiny golden owl with a pinch of potpourri by the sink,

Grandma always smelled of powder.
Her hands were soft and dry just like it;
As was her skin, soft and dry and secure as a comforter.

Grandma dated all her food.
I'd wonder what would happen if she found an undated can—
A rouge can of peas hidden from a month back.

We'd make polenta together for lunch.
Yellow cornmeal and milk with sour cream on the side,



(*Hairbrush*, continued)

Maybe a pinch of salt when it was done, just for flavor.

Uncle Tom would come with dad to make the Bakalai.
Smelly fish and salt and potatoes,
There'd be bones to watch out for, and Dad and Uncle Tom would argue about how much salt was needed.

Whenever there was wine,
There were shirley temples for me.
A pinch of wine and a lot of 7up made me feel like an adult.

In Grandma's back room she kept the Family Circus books.
PJ and Dolly and Jeffy and Billy,
And their cute hi-jinks which made me laugh when I was small.

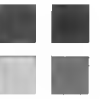
Only once did I hear Grandma say something odd
We were watching the news, boring as always
She scolded women who threw life away for a moment of...."passion."

Her magnets never changed.
The plastic butterflies were there, the groceries in a tiny bag,
I saved what I could from the ravagings of Aunt Millie later on.

Grandma had a way with macaroni, macaroni and this beef stew
That she'd put on egg noodles.
It was perfect and I loved her all the more for it.

Christmas brought the tiny little tree for the table.
The porcelain light up tree for the hi-fi system
And the little ornaments that bubbled colored water.

The hi-fi was old, and we'd sing "The Bear went over the Mountain"
Or listen to navy battle soundtracks.



I'd hide under the kitchen table, pretending to hide from destroyers.

In Grandma's bedroom was a clock and a statue of Mary.
Mary opened up to reveal Grandma's rosary.
The clock never stopped clicking loudly tick, tock, tick, tock.

Grandma always had her rosary when she'd take me to church.
She kept it in a little metal box in her purse (with the Chicklet gum)
Gilded to look like a Bible, with a picture of Mary on the inside.

Easter was time for lamb.
And money and chocolate in the eggs around her house-
Sometimes whole quarters, and the magical egg with two dollars.

The table would have eggs with our names scrawled on them.
And little sugar chicks at every plate,
And ham and green onions and egg before church.

I try not to think about the last times,
When the heat was broken in her house but she didn't complain,
And she wouldn't see the doctor about the pain in her side.

Then, the hospital,
She no longer looked strong in a sweatsuit of green;
But frail with large metal staples on her stomach.

I was promised the china.
And I saved one little bowl from "the old country".
The rest was taken by my Aunt like a vulture with a grocery bag, sweeping away
memories in one deftless motion.



Medieval Inspired Banner

batik on cotton

James Cochran



Ponytails and Pigtails

Stacy Claussen

Her name was Cynthia Minger, and even to this day, she haunts me. She wasn't the classic bully, but something much worse. She was the cute little darling that every adult just loved to coo over, and that gave her power, because no one could ever conceive of sweet little Cynthia Minger causing anyone harm.

Her appearance was deceiving, for she looked like a shiny ripe cherry, and had a smile that melted the heart of everyone – except me. Her hair was the color of tart strawberries and fell in long waves to her waist. Her heart shaped face was adorned with a sprinkling of freckles, and her mother dressed her in colorful dresses that looked as if they belonged to Alice in Wonderland.

I was on the plain and simple side of the beauty spectrum. My light brown hair was long and wavy, and my mother dressed me in a practical wardrobe consisting of jeans and t-shirts.

One day, in my first grade class, Mrs. Torbet rearranged our seating, and to my horror placed Cynthia Minger behind me. I had witnessed her treatment of other students who had been assigned the seat in front of her. Cynthia's behavior in these cases resembled medieval-style torture tactics, like the frog put down the back of Mary Lou Savior's blouse, and the pill bottle of red ants set free in Jeffery Rayburn's lunch. But she never got caught. Never. Someone else always, always took the fall.

At first, all was quiet, but then the fateful day came when Mrs. Torbet ran out of blunt-edged scissors, everyone had received a pair. Mrs. Torbet got into her desk and retrieved a sharp, shiny pair of full-sized, gleaming, stainless steel scissors and gave them to Cynthia, all the while cooing about how responsible and safe Cynthia always was.

It was the Easter season, and the sun shone in through lightly frosted windows, illuminating my work. I was cutting out and decorating Easter eggs, and after a while, I forgot about Cynthia Minger having Mrs. Torbet's full-sized, pointed-tip scissors. Mrs. Torbet left the room to get more construction paper from the art closet down the hall.

I felt a whisper of wind on the back of my neck, and then three snips—snip, snip, snip. My grandmother had bound my hair in a single ponytail that morning, but my head suddenly felt lighter. I looked down and saw my twelve-inch ponytail on the cold tile floor. My hand instinctively reached up and grabbed the back of my hair. I jumped up knocking over my chair and screamed at Cynthia Minger, "You cut off my ponytail! How could you do that?"

She just stood there looking at me with a smug smile on her freckled face. Something inside me exploded, and I grabbed the stainless steel scissors out of her

(Ponytails, continued)

hand. I returned her smug smile, and watched with pleasure as her eyes widened in fear while my own eyes darted between her left pigtail and her right. One pigtail had a pink ribbon, and the other a blue. Her fear was giving me power, and I began to chant in a singsong voice, "Pink or blue, pink or blue, pink or blue?"

To my astonishment Mary Lou Savoir and Jeffery Rayburn joined in my chant, and then other voices joined in, "Pink or blue, pink or blue, pink or blue?"

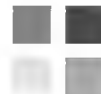
I had the power to end Cynthia Minger's bullying, forever. My hand darted out, grabbed her left ponytail with the pink ribbon, and pulled it toward me.

She started to struggle and tried to escape from my grasp, whining, "No, no, don't, please don't!"

I positioned the scissors around the left pigtail's pink ribbon and started to squeeze, but Mrs. Torbet appeared like Cynthia Minger's guardian angel, grabbing my wrist and demanding, "Let go of the scissors!"

I thought to myself, "it's over, it's all over."

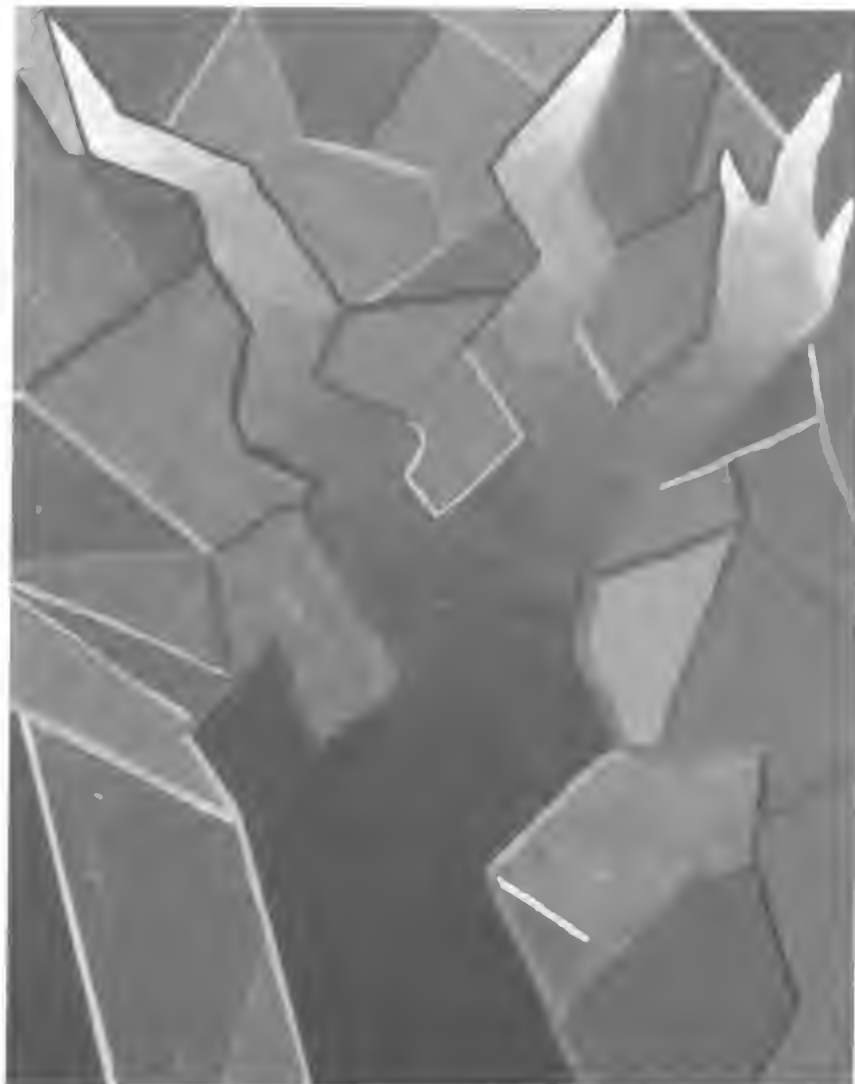
In the end, no one talked or stood up for me. While Mrs. Torbet was dragging me to the principal's office, Cynthia Minger worked her magic on my classmates. I never found out what she said to them, but as the story goes, I guess I cut my own ponytail off and blamed it on her. Her pristine reputation continued throughout out grade school years, but I took great pleasure in her pain when she got pregnant our senior year, and she was forced to resign from the post of Homecoming Queen, which was given to the first runner up, me.



Final Color Composition

acrylic on canvas

Nika Gawor

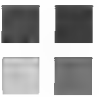




Jesus Would

Annie Domasica

He is a poem never read—but not quite so cliché as that.
He is alone in a crowded room—but more desperate.
He is the character he portrays on stage—but far more confused.
He is a little boy in front of the teacher—but more unsure.
He is the altar boy praying for grace—but more honestly.
He is the hand on the trigger of the gun—but too afraid.
He is the “fuck yous” and “you bitches”—but angrier.
He is the kid under the cupboard—but more hidden.
He is hot tears on the gravesite—but more mournful.
He is a single violet in the snow—but more lonely.
He is your “fag” and your “queer”—but more human.
He is your signs and your protests—but more loving.
He is the man you condemn to hell—but more beautiful.
He is your devil—but far more loved by God.



The Dent

Natalie Lapacek

Pictures
lie stacked
in a shoebox under my bed.

I didn't intend
to remember it all.
Things happen even when
you don't want them to.

Things happened
that I didn't want to.
But things happened
that I wouldn't change,
that I would welcome back

if I could.

Some people never leave,
despite what happens.

They leave a dent on your heart
that is never banged out,
but left alone
to remember the impact
of the collision.

When everything happened
to you,
I didn't want to care,
didn't want to remember,
but I did because

you left a dent.

Mira and the Night Dance

Professor Maia Kingman

My sisters are sleeping tonight, but I can't sleep. I hear the wind rising and falling, and who can sleep when the wind is speaking? I look out the window at the street. The street lights are glowing softly so that the houses, driveways, rose gardens—everything out there—looks a little dramatic, like they are all actors on a little stage.

And what a production! The trees and shrubs in my neighbor's yard are doing a crazy dance just like wild Indians. They way they shimmy and shake, I can see where the wind whips through them. They give shape to the wind, so that I fancy I can see it like a snake, winding around branches, corkscrewing up trunks.

And it's everywhere at once—even greedily seeking the edges of the cupola where I sit looking out. When it hits the windows, the wind curls my hair around its fingers and draws it outside, like I'm under water and my hair is trying to float away.

This makes me a little bit scared. You have to be careful about the spring wind. Its not always what you think it is. That happened to Raina Ramirez two springs ago. No one told her about the warm spring wind and one night in April she felt it calling to her, and she put her hands on the window sill and leaned out into it. The wet and warm tendrils of air brushed her cheek and pulled her hair out into the night, so she climbed out onto the roof and jumped. She imagined the dark, wet wind taking her to faraway places, where they would fly through the night together. But that was a tricky wind, a dishonest wind. It never intended to be her flying carpet, taking her to see spice mines and birds of paradise. It let her fall and break and it grabbed up her soul as it flew out of her body.

Needless to say, you have to be suspicious about the wind. So I sniff it carefully. It's cool and sweet like peonies or grass, not like honey or jasmine. That's a good sign. I hold out my hand to test it. It doesn't pull or tug me, but whips and spins around my arm. This wind doesn't want to hurt me. It just wants to play. I hold my head out the window to greet it. Hello wind! It is really playful tonight. The neighbor's evergreens are bouncing and flouncing like they've got an itch that they mean to scratch. That's it, I decide. If those trees and bushes are going to have that much fun with the wind tonight, so am I!

So I run downstairs and out the back door and stand in the middle of the yard and wait for the wind to inspire me. And then I shimmy and shake with the best of them. Up and down and side to side and sometimes a combination of the two, spiraling spirals like the wind says to do it. I pretend my feet are rooted to the ground, and then I let the trees tell me about the freedom of especially windy nights when they get to dance like there is no tomorrow.



Arbitrary

photograph

Anonymous



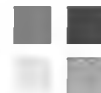


Bullhorns

Anthony G. Salati

When Grandpa hung the bullhorns over the door,
the bull, ruined and rampant, was in the back pen,
jolting down the muck tracks,
thumping its hooves against the railing,
jumping in circles, trying to shake off
the agony of the bare wounds on its head—
green bile flowing down to its collar.

Seeing the holes from the horns
behind the bull's ears—the color of pain
that clashed with its bark-colored skin,
remembering my own ear and the color of infection
left on the towel I had slept on the night before—
how it thickened and dried on the white cotton—
feeling the lump behind my ear grow
while my eardrum,
sedated, subdued, went silent,
I took those horns down
and brought them home with me,
knowing the bull could never grow horns again.



High Risks

Dr. Charles Kerlin

Inhale cigarette smoke deeply
And shift down to pass across yellow lines.

We swim out too far, over under-tows,
 between rocks,
And float to shore, sunburned, through a babble
 of currents and weeds.

We trust fragile ridges of snow to hold our blades
As we ski downhill out of control,
Racing our own shadows.
Terrified children fall in and out of our way.
We hold our line, trusting that ropes
Will stop us at bottom.

We love to be loved, love your care and feeding.
But watch our tongues, our teeth, our mouths.
Stay away from the bars.
Stay on the other side of the road.
Stay on the beach.
Stay behind the ropes.



Night: At Window Casing

Professor Maia Kingman

I am looking out the second story windows,
facing westward,
peering down at the street
where I now live.

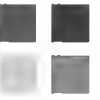
I've been peeling layers of paint
from these casings for many nights now.

I didn't think much of them before,
when they were covered in thick, cosmetic coats of
plum semi-gloss that pouted and preened
like a cheap coquette.

Now they stand dark, aged, and weathered like foremast and yardarms.
Their quiet hushes me.

They bespeak great tempests that have assailed the lintels,
swells of tears and pride and jealousies,
screaming squalls that shook the very foundation
before fading into silence,

leaving the house standing,
anchored.



Some nights I lie in bed and listen to the wind roll
and the house swell, heave, surge.
Occasionally it lets out an
unpremeditated groan.

Tonight the moaning gets me out of bed and
I am back at the windows, looking out, the
casing framing my view, shaping my
vision.

With sandalwood oil I
anoint sash and sill and
breathe in
the heady aroma of
wood.



Men

Jen Zak

The man arrives
on cunning fox feet.
He stands staring
up skirt and into blouse
with thirsty lips
and then goes home.



July

Dr. Mark. R. Seely

The Pleiades
before Electra's defection—
or was it Merope exhausting her radiance
for the love a Corinthian King:
a flash in the pan—
and a thousand blue sapphires of sunset
on the western sea,

an oscillating sprinkler
painting silver streams over the lawn,
across a shallow puddle on the sidewalk,
a coruscation that bleeds at once into chaos,
a thousand brilliant dancing spots
on the living room ceiling.

Ang paanglan nakin

Melissa Alba

On my birth certificate it says, Melissa Celine Dellota Alba. My whole name is Melissa Celine Dellota Alba y Baban y Diaz. MY NAME IS MELISSA. There, I capitalized it, I've said it, and so it is the truth. Mom calls me Mei-ling, and my friends call me Mel, but I AM MELISSA.

In Greek, it means honeybee. In Tagalog, it means my name. It means I'm adopted, it means I don't know who I really am. It is like the number zero. The color white because of the absence of color.

No one in the family has my name. I am the only Melissa. Yet, there are two Carmens, two Margaritas, and two Birgittas. They are relatives who were all born around the same time. No one was born around the same time as me. So I am alone, born in the year of the Pig.

I would've liked to know who my mother was. I heard she died during labor. But I also heard she lived and is now a kindergarten teacher. Maybe she was also born in the year of the Pig. Ambitious yet naïve and had no one to turn to.

And the story goes on that she fell in love or thought she did and had a baby she couldn't have for she was a child herself. I can see her looking out the window of her classroom, wondering about me, if she ever wondered about me.

At school, they don't believe my name is that long. So I had to drop Dellota y Baban y Diaz and just be Melissa Celine Alba. Sometime I wonder if I should change my name to Michelle because I'd be called that too. But I know it isn't me. I'm always Melissa.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more traditional, a name that means something to family. Melissa as Elsa or Margarita or Lulu. Something like Lulu will do.

Jimmy Was Dying

Joe Larson

Jimmy was dying. His auburn hair was on fire, and his crumpled body was riddled with shrapnel. Behind him, an exposed pipe hissed, releasing its noxious, superheated gases into the room. The pipe—which had just exploded with unusual violence—was part of the school’s ancient, explosion-prone heating system whose epicenter was the single most deadly boiler in North America, statistically speaking.

“Open a window,” Mr. Mahoy said. Sarah got up from her seat and walked to the window, taking extra care to step over Jimmy’s body. The flames had now spread to cover the rest of the fallen boy’s form. There would be no point in summoning the nurse. Mr. Mahoy pressed the call button on the intercom.

“Mrs. Yolán,” Mr. Mahoy said, “we need a clean-up crew and a fire extinguisher. This fire is getting rather large. You should probably hurry.”

“Sure thing, Mr. M,” Mrs. Yolán replied.

Satisfied, Mr. Mahoy turned away from the intercom to face his class. “Now if you will open your books to page seventy-four you will see that. . . . What is it, Greg?” Mr. Mahoy asked.

“Um, sir, part of Jimmy’s brain is on my book,” Greg said.

“Greg, show some maturity,” Mr. Mahoy responded. “You all heard Mrs. Yolán. The clean-up crew will be here in a few moments. Sarah, how’s the fire doing?”

“Not too bad,” Sarah replied, “But the smoke is making it kind of hard to breathe. Shouldn’t we go outside this time?”

“No,” Mr. Mahoy said. “You all know the rules. We only go outside if a pipe explosion kills six or more students. This explosion only killed one. At least I assume that it only killed one. Is anyone else out there dead?” Mr. Mahoy asked.

“No, Mr. M,” the class replied mechanically. He asked that question every time. He was required to by law. The flames were now climbing the walls, and Jimmy was little more than a pile of ashes. That eliminated the need for a burial. The school cemetery was already overcrowded, and even one less body to bury was a tremendous relief to the overstressed staff. Tuesday was Mr. Allen’s day to dig the graves. He would be pleased at the news of the free cremation. It only takes a few seconds to flush ashes down the toilet.

“Mrs. Yolán, where is the clean-up crew?” Mr. Mahoy asked, his finger again firmly pressing down on the intercom’s call button. “The smoke is completely obscuring the back of my room. How am I supposed to teach these students if I can’t even see them?”

(Jimmy, continued)

"I'm sorry, Mr. M," Mrs. Yolan replied. "The boiler isn't doing very well today. We've just had four more pipe explosions. A few of the blasts cleared the six-student mark, so you'll just have to wait. You know perfectly well that the clean-up crew attends to classrooms in order of descending casualties."

"Well, what am I supposed to do?" Mr. Mahoy asked. "I'm giving a test tomorrow, and unless we can get this fire under control, these kids won't know the material. A few students have already passed out from the smoke, and I think that Suzy just caught on fire. Suzy, are you on fire?" Mr. Mahoy asked.

"Yes, Mr. M," Suzy replied mechanically.

"See," Mr. Mahoy said, "I have needs, too. I'm tired of getting the lowest priority." A huge explosion rocked the entire school on its foundation. Mrs. Yolan didn't reply. It was obvious that the clean-up crew would not arrive any time soon, so Mr. Mahoy released the call button. A new string of boiler-related explosions ripped through the school, but no one noticed inside Mr. Mahoy's room. The roar of the fire was far too loud. The support beams were beginning to fall, and most of the students had collapsed from smoke inhalation. Visibility was too poor to tell if any of them had been incinerated.

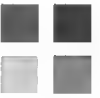
"Suzy, have you been incinerated yet?" Mr. Mahoy asked. There was no response. "Okay, that makes two deaths for sure. If any of you who are still conscious can confirm that at least four more of your classmates are dead, we can go outside."

"Stephen, Rick, and George are definitely dead, and I think that Sam is, too," a muffled voice called out from somewhere within the smoke.

"How sure are you that Sam's dead?" Mr. Mahoy asked.

The voice hesitated for a moment before replying, "Very."

"Alright, we've met the minimum requirement. Everybody out," Mr. Mahoy bellowed so as to be heard the inferno that now engulfed the entire room. Four students ran out the door. Apparently the six-death minimum had more than been exceeded. "Darn it," Mr. Mahoy said to himself. "I should have had first priority after all. Now these students will never be ready for their test." Mr. Mahoy carefully collected his papers as a flaming support beam fell, crushing his desk. Tomorrow, Mr. Mahoy thought to himself, he would remember to bring a fire extinguisher.



The Reservations of One

Becky Scherer

Give me proof.
I want to see your face.
Turn my water into red wine;
walk across the river and
meet me at the shore;
introduce me to your followers
and invite me to supper.
Shake my hand when I
enter your house.
He believes because he should;
she believes because she fears;
show me why I should believe,
give me reason enough.
Hold my hand and lead me to the altar,
stay by my side when
doubt creeps into my thoughts.
Let me see the grains of your fingerprints;
let me gaze at your reflection in the mirror;
give me proof—
let me see your face.



Mudslinger

Danny Waclaw

He stands before the bloodthirsty crowd,
Slinging mud to everyone about
The man who ought to rot in Hell
For ruining his blessed country so well.
He isn't stupid; in fact, he's smart!
He's got this newspeak down to an art!
He rhymes, he spits, he explodes with phrases
Like "economic downturns" and "better wages."
So, with all these jumping words,
Which, though sugared, are in fact absurd,
He tells everyone just how bad America is
Under the present political wiz.
This man's name—it isn't Joseph Lieberman,
Or George W. Bush, or the Reverend Al Sharpton.
His name is Politician, and (no matter who)
Mudslinging is the best he can do.



Detail of Lid

ceramic box

Elliott Zimmer

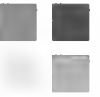




No Sex!

Danny Waclaw

Behind a woman just five feet tall
Sits a sign on the schoolroom wall.
It reads, "No sex! It's wrong and unjust!
There is no place for carnal lust!"
This woman, in curlers rolled so tight
As to almost cause loss of eyesight,
Doesn't even teach sexual education
Or run a religious administration.
In fact, she is herself the Home Ec. Teacher
(But may have missed her calling as a preacher).
She is, at present, fifty years of age
Though she acts like a teenager meant for the state!
She dances through the room, talking about cheese,
And waits for her students to "take your seats, please."
"Today," she says, interrupting herself,
"We're going to talk about something else.
Not about food, though it's an interesting topic,
But about sex and how you kids should stop it!"
She marches through the room with a tirade of phrases
Like "genital herpes" as she looks on dull faces.
The students listen in quiet desperation
Whispering, "Jesus Christ! Why this demonstration?
She's danced around here for God knows how long
Yet she, self-admittedly, is a virgin, right or wrong!"
"What! I heard that!" she screeched to the class,
"And it's true, and I'm proud, so I'll let it pass."
The bell finally rings, and to the students' surprise
She gives out one more piece of advice.
"Go ahead and have sex, see what I care!"
And so they escaped from the old virgin's lair.



Pain

Angela Williams

Carla knows she is not going to be chosen.
It has happened before,
Her tennis partner will be the gym teacher,
Who is fat and slow.
She will stumble and skin her knees.
The others will laugh. They always do,
As if she is without ears, much less without heart,
A colorless wall, constantly dinged and scraped
And painted over with the same
Flat paint.



The Perfect Daughter

Susan Huss

"When I went to Stanford" Nothing else was going through Julia's head but her father's words as she reached into her mailbox. Everyday for two months since she had sent in her application, she had checked the mail with trembling hands and shallow breaths. And so far she had been safe, but she knew one day she'd have to face up to it—was today the day?

Her searching hand felt a plump manila envelope. Her breath caught short as she pulled it out and saw the return address. "Well, I guess this is it," Julia thought.

"I'll be so proud of you," her father was always saying. "I just know my little girl will do as great at the old Ivy Leagues as I did."

Julia quickened her step as she approached the elevator to her third floor apartment with a pulsating head. Her hands were shaking so badly she did not think she would be able to open the envelope. "I better not open this until I get in my room in case someone sees me," she thought.

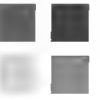
Feeling a little light-headed, she finally found the key to her apartment and fumbled open the door. She got a drink of water to replenish the fluids she was sweating out profusely.

"Stanford will be a fool if it doesn't take my Julia," she heard her father's voice echoing in her head as she tore into the envelope in the safety of her room.

The first word her eyes caught was, "Congratulations." Julia burst into tears. "Damn them!" she screamed in agony as she stuffed the envelope into her box with the cigarettes and other secrets she kept hidden from her interfering father.

She lit up and smoked for a few moments and then sprayed perfume around her room as she heard her father opening the door. Straightening her skirt and wiping away her tears, Julia put on her puppy dog face and walked out of the room with a pouty lip.

"Daddy," she said, "I still haven't gotten a response from Stanford!"



Insecurity

Annie Domasica

they always promise to be good and true
they always swear they'll be right there
and these doubts have been my friends for years
and my reflection has followed me through
they are the loyal destructors of me

and photos start to lie to me
and conversations start to fade to mere words
promises are broken before they are made
knives jabbed in my back without a blade
they slowly surround me in isolation

swallowed into fear and frustration
I mask devastation in contemplation
and walk aimlessly with purpose
of escape from all things sworn true
too fragile to be held by my shaking hands

isolation has never left me lonely
doubt has been forever by my side
manipulation comes home every night to me
covered by my blanket of insecurity
we sleep and dream all the things we do not see

and if they ever begin to fade
I am sure only of their return
as fall creeps into winter
and the afternoon sun gives way to night
they will not leave me lonely or fine



Beautiful Girl

Bridget Newman

I watched the girl before me step up to the microphone and say her lines. She gave her name, her future major, and why she believed she should be the Irish Parade Queen. She flashed a smile rounded at the mouth due to its lack of sincerity. She walked back to her position among the other contestants with impeccable poise: head up, chest out, one foot directly in front of the other. I felt the stare of every pair of eyes in the large auditorium scanning my appearance. I felt overdressed and underdeveloped. I had spent too long picking out that green dress.

I walked, trembling, to the microphone in a blur of motions I don't remember voluntarily making. I stepped up, the words of my speech I had practiced so many times whizzing in and out of my brain in tiny fragments I could not grasp. I spoke without a single conscious thought; "My name is Bridget Newman." That was enough. I was the only person in the pageant that did it. I said my last name, the biggest no-no of them all. No sooner had I said it then I wished I could have taken it back, eliminate it from the memory of time. The only thing eliminated, though, was me. I was disqualified.

The announcement of the semi-finalists was made about an hour later. I know I was the only girl not on the edge of her seat, shaking with anticipation, eager to hear my name read aloud as one of the chosen. The 50 women called to move on stood and congratulated each other and gave their regrets to the rest of us. That night I distinctly recall telling myself, "If you were beautiful, you would have had the confidence to say the line right, just like everyone else." That night I also distinctly recall crying myself to sleep.

Two months after the contest my picture and letter I had sent for admission were returned. When I saw the photograph, that happy girl smiling for her dad on the other side of the camera, I remembered he had told me "how beautiful" I looked that day. I was happy then. Being satisfied with life is the greatest beauty of all. Somehow, though, life has become a beauty pageant and we're all competing for the crown of approval.

It has been nearly six years since I competed in the "Irish Parade" beauty pageant, but I still carry a scar. It is permanent. I will always remember the shame I felt in hating who I was because of what I looked like. I wanted to tell myself, "I don't need this pageant to tell me that I'm beautiful!" I did, though. I wanted to prove to myself that I could be a model if I really wanted to be. I needed others to see me as I wanted to see myself.

I didn't tell anyone how I wanted to come on stage in pajama pants and a long-sleeved T-shirt and just chat one-on-one about life because that's me. I didn't tell anyone that for months after the contest I couldn't look at myself in the mirror the



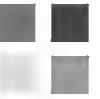
same way, that I nearly cringed in shame at my own reflection. I didn't tell anyone that behind the pearly smile and bright eyes was a sad little girl who did not belong. No, I didn't tell anyone. I just smiled my rounded smile and walked back with impeccable poise just like everyone else.



Halloween

Anthony G. Salati

The fog blurred the on-coming car lights,
the masked kids did not yield,
ghosts in the trees, laughing—playing.



Buttermilk

Dr. Charles Kerlin

Mother drains her morning glass of buttermilk.
A bluish haze coats the glass.
"Want one?" she says, reaching for the green carton
which smells blue.
"It's good for you."
Whale vomit
Cow's cum
Witches' brew.

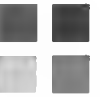


Color Wheel Composition

acrylic

Cyndi Haskell





The Beatles Were Right

Susan Huss

When my best friend left,
My mother soaked up my tears
With the shoulder she offered.

When I left, my dad typed
With two index fingers
To tell me he loved me.

When my health left,
My grandmother baked favorites
She knew I couldn't keep down.

When my sanity left,
My friends tracked it down
And dragged it back.

When nothing is left,
I'll have no fear. . . .
All you need is love.



Envy

Angela Williams

I ordered a Mintini,
Sapphire Blue gin with a floating, fragrant mint leaf.
The drink was good although
It was half-price night at Scholar's Inn
And I came alone.



Mandolin Zen

Dr. Mark R. Seely

The modern mandolin consists
of eight strings
tuned in pairs: GG, DD, AA, EE,
the same
four courses as a violin.

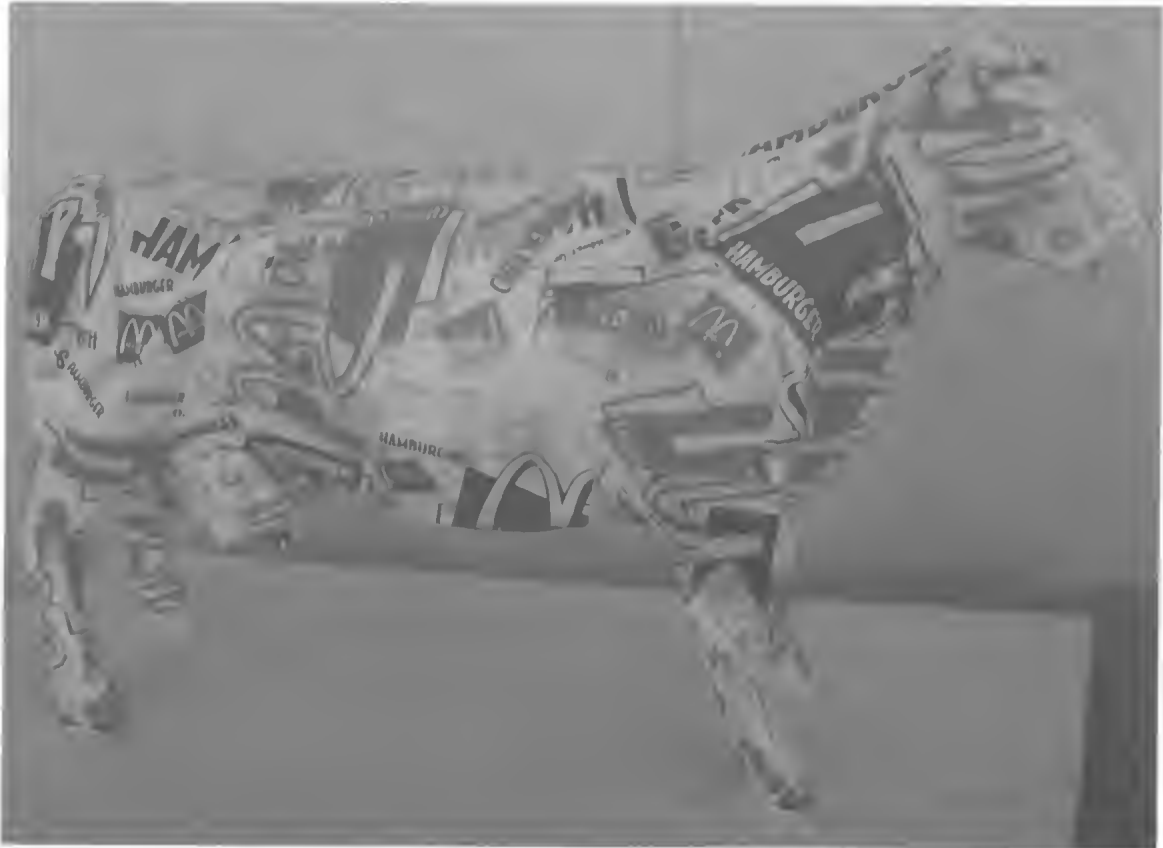
It is virtually
impossible to get both strings
of each
pair to
be tuned
identically,
so there
is always
a sharp
discordant
sound when
both strings
of a pair
are struck
together.

The discord is short-
lived, and the two strings
quickly settle into a stable pattern
of complimentary resonance. It's this
brief discord followed by an oscillating
cooperative resonance—chaos followed by
a self-evolving order—that gives the mandolin
its distinctive sound. Something similar happens
as I experience on-going activity moment-by-moment:
a flash of color, a sudden movement, something in the
corner of my eye, a fluid wash of raw sensation—what?
What? And then her face resolves and her voice gently woos
my attention. Chaos followed by a self-evolving order.
Because the strings of each pair are physically close together,
it is fairly easy to pass the pick back and forth across them
in rapid sequence, a technique called tremolo. During tremolo,
the pair of strings is never allowed to settle into a stable
pattern of resonance. Instead, the rapid back and forth
motion of the pick generates an artificial Resonance
by regular repetition of discord. A forced order
composed of rapidly sequenced bits of chaos.
And thus do the events of my life unfold
in staccato succession to be
arranged by desire.

Transformation Sculpture

paper

Lauren Moretti





Grandma's Tea Parties

Jean Monfort

My grandma would put on her face each morning.
An ancient ritual for an ancient woman.
Powder and blush and lipstick,
Just to walk and reheat her frozen blueberry pancakes for breakfast.

Sometimes she'd brush my hair
With the antique boar's hair brush.
She'd stroke my hair with the brush gently, or sometimes my back
While we watched "Lassie Come Home" on the nice television.

My grandma knew a magic trick.
Tell me five cards and I'll find them in this mess of a deck
She did it every time.
Queen of spades, five of clubs, ten of clubs, seven of diamonds, three of hearts.

Sometimes we'd play rummy
Or bunco with the little white dice.
She'd clap with me when I won
And cry "Bun-co!" with me when all five dice were the same.

My grandma only cried once
Looking at a picture of her family.
She was the one in the white stockings she said
Pointing at her dead family and shaking like a twig.

Sometimes she'd take me out.
We'd sing Alan Sherman or church music,
Then play miniature golf at Celebration Station,
And she'd tell me of her golf fields of real green grass.



(*Tea Parties*, continued)

My Grandma bought me a tea set—
Perfect white with little colored flowers.
I fill the tea kettle with water
Just to watch it pour from the spout like clockwork.

Sometimes she'd join me at my party,
And we'd have little cookies and water,
And talk about Family Circus;
How cute little Dolly was with her own tea set.

My Grandma taught me to walk on wheels.
I would practice on her circle footrest,
One foot in front of the other.
She'd hold my hand as I circused my way across the living room.

Sometimes we'd go to the brick building
And have lamb and soft bread with the Family.
I'd get hugs and one dollar bills
While the lamb was tough and salty and wonderful in my mouth.

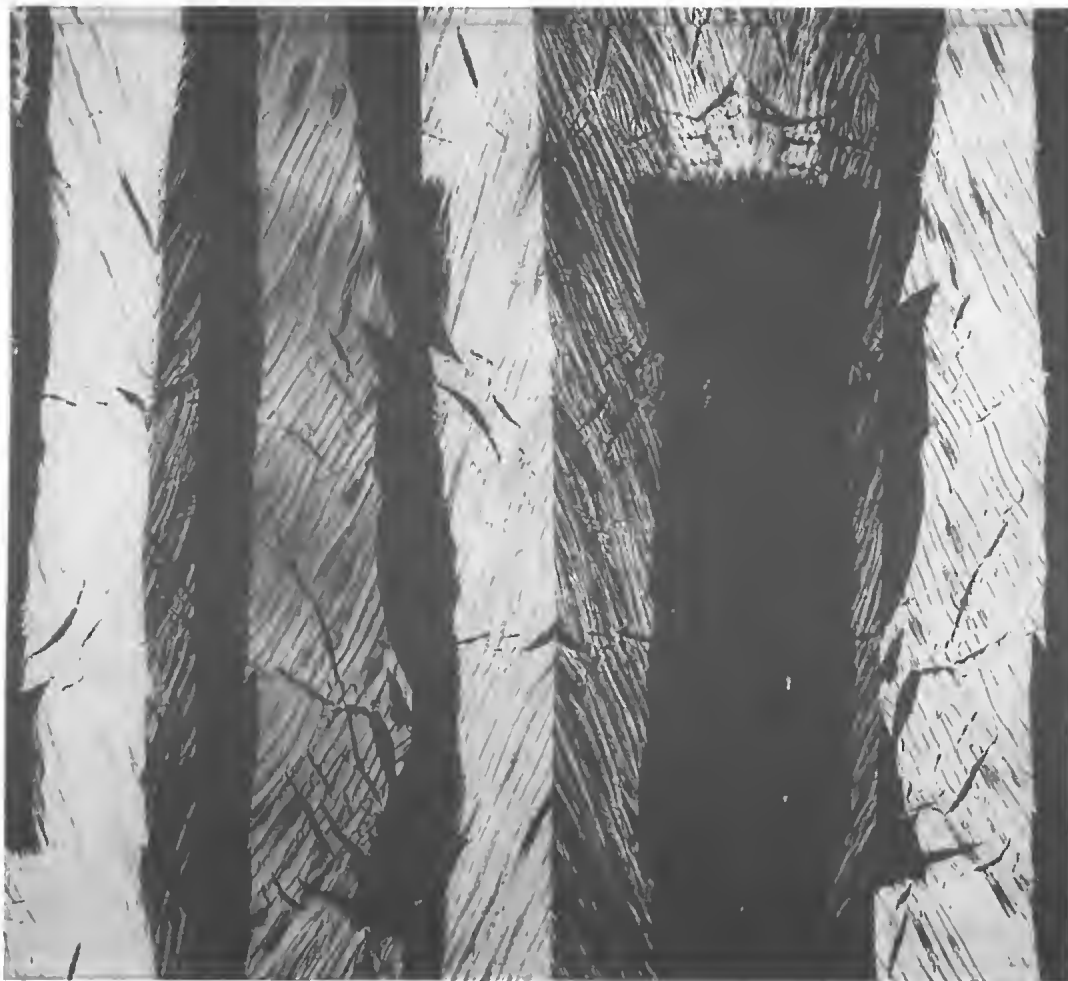
But I always remember the tickling of the boar brush,
Or the "American Waterways" she'd always record,
Or Freckles and Buttons, the two clowns she made by hand,
Or gnocchi, polenta, bakalai and Shirley Temples I'd get on holidays,
They're always there, memories that come when I see a brush,
Or the empty Celebration Station lot, or tea sets with perfect spouts on the pitcher.



Shibori Wall Hanging

bleached cotton

Michelle Cimaroli





Drifting

Jen Zak

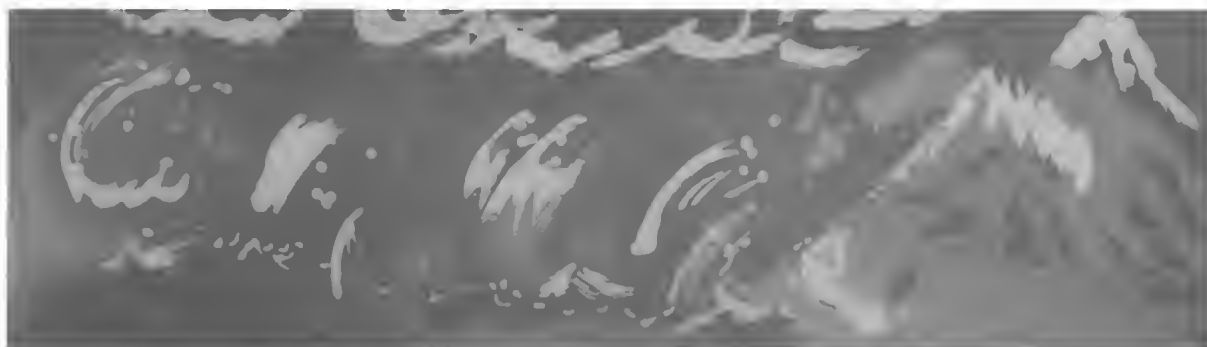
like a soul extending its breadth
across the body
the snow whispers and snakes
across the drifts in silence.
leaving behind the soft
lingering of a whisper,
the corners of a smile.



Japanese Landscape

batik on cotton

James Cochran





Fire Demon

batik on cotton

James Cochran





Thanksgiving

Anthony G. Salati

Lighted candles are placed
on the dining room table,
then the casseroles;
green bean, sweet potato;
then the salads; fruit, Caesar,
potato, macaroni—
two bowls of stuffing,
an equal amount of gravy,
enough cranberry sauce for five pies.
After we take our seats,
mom brings in the turkey,
it takes its place
in the middle of the table.

This is Kevin's first Thanksgiving with us—
We fell in love while dancing the night away
at the town fair last year.
He works for his father's
construction company as a field manager.
He makes good money—
the kind most pretend to have.
He usually heads to work at sun up,
returning when light lingers in the evening.

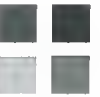
He says that I look good in a bikini.
He will take me in his toned arms,
run his hands down my back and tell
me I'm beautiful,
I am the one he's dreamt of.
He loves my curves,



(Thanksgiving, continued)

I catch him staring often.
I like to take his hand, kiss his fingers,
run them down my neck
and cup his hand around my breast—
he breathes so deep when I do that,
getting turned on.
He kisses my lips like jewels,
like I was made to love him—
I was made to be his wife.

Thanksgiving's feast was over.
I look up at Kevin
to see his hazel eyes gaze
at me before he and my dad head
to the living room to watch
the Cowboys play the Redskins.
His eyes staring at me, not in love,
in shock, looking at my stomach, disgusted.



I go to the upstairs bathroom,
lock the door,
strip to my underwear
and stare at myself—bending over
sideways, forwards and backwards
to see how my skin rolls.
I walk the length of the mirror,
staring at how my breasts bounce,
how tight my butt is,
how big my thighs are.
I put my clothes back on
and reach for the doorknob,
I stop to look at my face,
I stare for a while
before backing away from the door,
turning on the overhead fan,
kneeling by the toilet
and throwing up Thanksgiving—
knowing that would make him happy.



Pick n' Save: Monday

Professor Maia Kingman

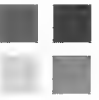
Yesterday I went to the
supermarket. I needed to buy
cling peaches, number 8 spaghetti.
Totinos cheese pizza
for a late night
snack.

Basket in hand, I rounded the
corner to the produce
aisle. The coyote woman was
sitting in a bin, buried waist
deep in potatoes.

What are you doing here, I asked.
Trying to grow eyes, she said.

Bewildered, I turned
and walked the length of the
supermarket. The coyote woman was
sitting in a
cooler. It was filled with TV dinners.

What are you doing here, I asked.
Sounding the bottom with my toes, she said.



I turned to the meats.
There she was, laid out
lengthwise, covered in
breakfast sausages and
lunchmeats.
Only her face, belly, and toes exposed.

Trying to be a corpse, she said.

When I had done with my
shopping, I found
her stationed at the
checkout.

What are you doing here, she asked.
Dinner, I said.
You take the supermarket for granted, she said, handing
me my change. I looked at her and blinked.
Have a nice day, she said.
I think she meant it.

Grandma's—with Special Attention to Rye Toast

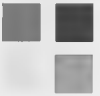
Jean Monfort

Grandma's is located off I-65, right next to the Fireworks warehouse. You'll recognize the Fireworks warehouse, it's a giant white steel structure with "FIREWORKS" garishly painted on one side. Grandma's is not much to look at, I'll grant you. Old, brown, white peeling paint and cracked and broken parking lot—it looks like the truck stop old men look at and hiss. The inside is greasy and old, with one small part a convenient store, and the other part the 24-hour diner. It is sit as you please, and I prefer the cushiony benches to the tables, but I say to each their own. Some of the booths do not look sanitary—well, much of what you see doesn't, but avoid booths with giant cracks in the seats.

Now, ordering drinks at Grandma's is simple enough. Coffee is always available, though consistency is questionable. Water tastes a little funny, perhaps it's well water—but highway water always tastes funny. I myself get tea, because it's just hot water and a tea bag. It's simple to make late at night, though I have been known to go for their hot chocolate (served hot with lots of whipped cream). Sodas and milk are also available, for the unadventurous.

After you've ordered drinks, you have to choose your food. Most people make a big issue out of this, and true enough there are things you don't eat at Grandma's past midnight. Chicken, in my experiences, seems to be generally avoided, as do pasta dishes. Cheese sticks are a good choice of appetizers. Biscuits and gravy are the choice of many people, particularly those in sports, but others lean towards the burgers, which are always made greasy and please people on a guttural level. Salads may be ordered, but if salads are your thing, may I suggest Devons? It's not open all night, but it's a bit classier.

I advise rye toast. Rye toast is perhaps the trickiest of toasts, as any toast maker will know. White is on the easiest side of the spectrum, and rye is on the opposite end, along with French bread (which you never toast). Grandmas' style of toasting rye toast is a Mecca to me. Thick, healthy slices toasted enough to be dry and crackling, but not burned so that the rye flavoring is lost. Butter is added for you, so if butter is not on your health food list, then say so ahead of time. But I digress. The butter soaks into the center of the toast, but not the edges. This creates a wonderful mixture of textures, warm and soft and crunchy at the same time, the epitome of good toast. The waitress is always happy to provide you with jam as well, and I myself go



(*Grandma's*, continued)

for strawberry—which is a very unassuming jam late at night, not too complex (as say for example, raspberry or mixed fruit). Don't drown the toast in the jam, and you will have a wonderful tasty late-night experience.

Some may call me eccentric in my preference of Grandmas' rye toast, but I will tell any soul who goes to try it. I say they will not be disappointed. Grandmas' rye toast is a jewel in that greasy pit. And if you're lucky, the Fireworks warehouse won't explode prematurely on you.



The Guy in 1A

Susan Huss

Larry inches toward his second story window but does not get too close, not wanting to fall out of it. He walks away and puts on some Sinatra. After feeding his cat, Larry listens to his one phone message—the one from his dream girl, the Cable Chick, that he received two months ago. One of these days he is going to find out her number and give her a call. For now, he walks across his wooden floor, sits on his immaculate white, plastic covered vinyl sofa, and reaches for his nose spray.

Larry looks out the side window of his apartment at the end of the hall and thinks of his life as the “guy in 1A.” No one knows his name. Occasionally he gets a visit from someone—when they receive his mail by mistake. The people at work know him as the “guy with a Kleenex in his hand.” He is a slave to his pathetic job, which he has been working at for twenty years, during which time he has gotten a dollar raise. The money he makes is never even enough to pay for his apartment in the city. If it were not for the inheritance he got from his dead parents, there would be no way he could afford to live in Chicago.

The sounds of car horns and impatient commuters echo in his ears from the street below. Numbness paralyzes him as he realizes he is a nobody. Memories swirl around him in fast motion, and he remembers a time when people loved him. But it has been twenty years since the crash squeezed the life out of his parents’ shattered bones and since Larry shut out life. Now he wonders if there is a reason to go on being the “guy in 1A.” He wonders how long it will take someone to notice if . . .



The Sailor's Chicago

photograph

Anonymous





My Pumas, My Friends

Bridget Newman

I think I did everything you're supposed to do in college
because if I didn't do it all now I never would have
and now I look back and regret nothing.

I almost got my heart broken,
then I had a one night stand,
then I met the love of my life
and that was all within two weeks.

I got my one great drunk story.
Sad but true,
every college student needs just one.

I spent my 21st birthday recovering from the night before
thanks to the senior class
and bowling
and beer.

I've made great friends,
that even great distances cannot divide.

I've ditched a class,
I've missed a class,
I've forgotten I even had class.

I've learned to speak my mind
and my heart
with intelligence.

I've read great works of the past



and present
and written great work of my own.

I've been gifted with great teachers
and have come to call them
great friends.

I've danced on the stage,
I've danced on the bar,
I've danced in my room's open doorway
to celebrate the end of mid-terms and finals.

I've showered in stalls,
I've shared blackouts,
I've had snowball fights at midnight.

I've screamed on the court,
the field,
the track,
for my Pumas,
my friends,
in go-karts and gym shoes and spikes and cleats.

I've chosen a career path,
I've changed a career path,
and I've challenged myself
to go beyond what I ever thought
were my limits.

I've known loss and failure,
death of a friend
and devastation.



(*Pumas*, continued)

But I've also known success
and accomplishment
and triumph.

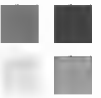
I've seen my friends
grow and struggle and change
and lead.

I've come a long way in my time here.
I've come to know
who I am
and what I want
and why.

I've pushed and I've persevered and I've made it.

With cap and gown,
with diploma in one hand
and saved tears in the other,
I will remember what I've done.

After all,
If you don't remember it, it didn't happen.



Homage to Nature VII: Barn Series

mixed media

Professor Bonnie Zimmer







Measure Alumni

In thinking about this year's edition, it was the staff's commitment to continue the work of the previous editors in bringing in a greater, more contemporary edition this year. As we explored what that expansion looked like, we discovered that there were open doors to us—ready to be traveled through to make this issue something new and moving. However, we felt a deep commitment to continue in the rich tradition that has been laid for *Measure* from the work of so many before us. This section is what we came up with.

In the next pages, you will read the work of previous editors and faculty advisors of *Measure*. As much as we are about continual growth and progression, we can not forget those that made it possible to do so. So here it is; our salute and gratitude.

Anthony G. Salati
Editor in Chief



Day Four

Heather Moser Seville

The brochure claimed it was Madeline Albright's favorite restaurant, though Lionel Richie on repeat-one overhead significantly diluted the haughty waiter in a tux.

"If Czechs consider chicken and pigeon interchangeable, then so do we," we said assuredly, having garnered this minutia from a disreputable source and ultimately discounted it.

While the chef clatters and thwacks about the kitchen, we deliberate on whether attending the opera makes up for pretending the museums were closed and instead shopping while the dollar was strong. I tally our Virtuous and Virtue-less activities on a coaster and lament that my handwriting would never inspire a font. You frown upon my small and unattainable goals.

Your food arrives, covered in sauce, alarming tufts of ham forming a wary feathery barrier between your knife and the bird. You reach across the table toward the slip with the magic phrase, the lie that renders my meals safer than yours: "Jsem vegetariánský." You ask me to trade, pleading, "Odds are it's chicken. Worst case, duck." I gaze out to the castle courtyard at the statues covered with pigeons.

Ah well. Ignorance tastes like chicken.



We Have Wines

Professor Emeritus John Groppe

It's the wine that shocks—not the brittle
bread—

and reveals the Christ.

Today, a sherry, golden in the cup,
syrup like but sharp on the tongue,
the wine is grape, but not grape,
something unforeseen on the vine
except by the far foreseeing Father,
who said, "Bring forth,"
and affirmed what he had made,
and the maiden mother, who at Cana
said, "They have no wine."

We have wines—

sweet ambers, tart rosés, almost bitter
reds—

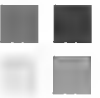
that evoke our own transformation.



Wright College Word Pictures for Marlys, Natalie and Rocco

Bob Blackwood

I had a dream a few weeks ago,
A dream of the 1970's,
A dream about those events and
More recent events
That we were all part of and,
For the most part,
A dream of those things which were never on camera.
I dream of standing around the flagpole at the old Wright campus
And reading off the names of those killed in Vietnam so far,
A list that had far more Willy Joneses and Victor Santiagos than people with Anglo-Saxon names like mine.
A memory about voting "no" for a prof who gave all "A's" to his students,
While wishing he could stay for other reasons.
Of Chairman Fred Hampton of the Illinois Black Panther Party speaking in my classroom,
Because they would not let him speak anywhere else.
Weeks later he was murdered in the sunrise hours by men
in a blue uniform which my father had worn and
which I always try to respect.
The smell of popcorn sold by students and faculty
To make The Wright Move possible to a new campus,
A campus made possible by students, faculty and community,
And no one else.
I dreamed of ten thousand papers
Brimming with corrections in green or red ink
Knowing that only the last page with a grade on it
Would ever be read again by anyone.



I dreamed of faces, faces that we would never see again,
Faces of past chairs, past professors, past people that
we did not like,
Past lovers that we would never see again.
I dreamed of them and I thought of you,
Going out to do God knows what of worth.
And hoping that you would know that you are part of us,
And we are part of you,
And that the future has no beginning and no end.
And no small kindness we show to each other is ever really small.

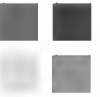


A Dandy Line Up

Amy Ceadar

Dandelions are a sure sign of spring. They are not, however, the most welcome of plants. Below is a guideline to tell what type you are depending on your reaction to them:

1. You think it's a weed—you are a pessimist.
2. You think it's a flower—you are an optimist.
3. You know it's an herb, *T. officianale* being the scientific name—you are a botanist.
4. You think it makes a delicious wine—you are a hobbyist.
5. You use the root as a substitute for coffee—you are a health nut.
6. You cook and eat the leaves—you are a vegetarian.
7. You use the root as a laxative—you believe in herbal medicine.
8. You let the dandelions be food for the rabbits in your yard—you are an animal lover.
9. You spray weed killer on them so you will have the best lawn in the neighborhood—you have a bad case of keep-with-the-Joneses-itis.
10. You hate it that the flowers you planted won't grow but dandelions will—you are the average person.
11. You see them as a sign of childhood, innocence and spring—you are a romantic.
12. You think that all through the summer days they will bask in the summer rays—you are a poet.
13. You blow the seeds in your neighbor's yard—you are a sadist.
14. You hate them but fertilize them any way—you are a masochist.
15. You think that if there's one soon they will take over your yard—you are paranoid.
16. You will rid your lawn of them if it is the last thing you do—you are a obsessive-compulsive.
17. You plant a garden of nothing but dandelions—you are eccentric.
18. You think everyone should have a dandelion free yard regardless of the cost—you sell weed killers.
19. You think it is what it is and that's what it is—you are a philosopher.
20. You think they would make a fine design for fabric—you are a fashion designer.
21. You believe that if you treat them as flowers they are sure to die—you believe in reverse psychology.
22. You believe that there will always be dandelions no matter what you do—you are a realist.
23. You believe that you should just live and let be—you are a dandelion.



Morocco

Becky Facemyer-Bringewatt

Flat-topped mountains
stand guard like jealous kings
above valleys of palm trees,
pines, thorn bushes, aspens
changing color with the seasons,
the peaks remain the same.
On the distant horizon
the rocks, like fortresses
in their solitary watch,
stand sentinel over the dusty landscape,
quietly aging in the winds.
Women and donkeys
carry heavy burdens on their backs
of palm fronds, alfalfa,
tree branches, grain.
Turbaned men on bicycles
wear long white robes,
pointed yellow shoes,
traveling long distances
while time loses its meaning,
and only the position of the sun
reveals its passing.
Driving too fast over winding roads,
around blind curves,
along cliff sides
to a town not far distant,
and only worlds away.



Okay

Philip Deaver

I don't like the shortening of the days,
the year's desultory autumn decline.
But November 15,
coming down the street into the sun, 6:45 AM,
the lake calm in a white shroud of mist,
I smile awake, and warm to possibilities.
The day begins damp. It will be cool.
Suddenly I'm happy.
A night's sleep under my belt,
I can handle all there is to do and the more
there is to do after that. Circumstance
hasn't yet tied its first knot in me,
and there are a lot of things I usually think of
that haven't yet come to mind.
Okay, it's an illusion. But the sun
is just above horizontal to the flat plain of water,
the sky rose red to the east,
calming to dark blue above;
the lake is poised and pending, the green
surrounding the water is primordial friends with it,
the cypress knees up from mud
with all the optimism of a real tree.
Everything seems to know
that everything will be fine.
From now on I'll go to work every morning by this route—
it will be daily mass, without homily;
instead, the coming-on sunlight over new paradise,
vote for peace and calm.
Okay. I'll dive in. I can. Like the anhinga
I see swimming by the dock,
I can dry my wings later.



Grieving

Lisa Phillips

Numb with the searing horror of it,
I do my best to take it in.
It's important for me to know—
To really know—it happened
And to come to some conclusion
As to why and when and how
But my heart keeps asking questions
That my mind cannot answer.
My soul keeps searching for peace,
But, for today there is none.
For now, the good does not outweigh the bad
For now, the loving is not worth the pain
My only hope is that someday it will.



Shroud

Annie Domasica

covered, curled up, crying
in a shroud of alcohol and a cloud of foggy vision
which brought a moment of much needed clarity,
stripped her of right and perfect and together
made her real and honest
made her feel
like a scared little girl again
fourteen, eighteen, twenty-one
no longer strong enough to drown those sorrows
push them down, silence them,
instead—tonight the drink made them
swim, float, scream
for attention, for touch, to be seen
and the drink fought with the soul fought with the strength
fought the ongoing battle of insecurities lost, hidden, forgiven
damned by thought, philosophy, religion
resurrected by friends who give unspoken permission
to be weak, to die, to need
to ache in bed and fall asleep with tear stained eyes
only to rise in the morning
to trade the winding sheet for her cape
and face the world with superwoman eyes
swollen with last night's reverse masquerade
and a body that pangs from hard, drunk sleep
with a mind that reels from her moment of weakness (truth)
and a heart that rests meekly in their love



Trapped

Lisa Phillips

Trapped. Tapped out.
Starving for something.
Making days turn into years.
The box is closing in.
Mother. Friend.
Daughter. Wife.
Where are those dreams I had?
Are they all wrapped in tissue paper
at the bottom of my dresser drawer?
Or are there great blue skies
waiting
just outside the murky night that is my life?



Ou Sont Les Cheap Dry Sherries of Yesterday? A Sonnet

Bob Blackwood

At the large supermarket on the mall,
They no longer market cheap dry sherry.
The Harvey's Bristol Cream and the Dry Sack
Stand remote on the top shelf,
Their two digit prices keeping the faith
For full professors of English, corporate execs,
And maybe the odd member of the History Department.

She would slurp a dry domestic sherry,
Perhaps starting with a glass over Sylvia Plath at noon
And ending with a spill over Ted Koppel at dinner.
Her breath was grapey sweet; her saliva, a little sticky.
The stemware gradually broke,
Leaving shards of glass among the shag carpeting,
A reminder of yesterday and tomorrow.



Protection

Jason Grzegorek



The Intimacy of Strangers

Breain Ma'Ayteh

"Excuse me, are those seats taken?"

I glared at the woman and her male companion, though the dim lighting made it impossible for her to read my expression. "No," I said, and began to remove the coats blanketing the two seats beside me. Brian said nothing, only shifted his legs to let the couple pass.

As soon as she sat down, the smell of the girl's perfume invaded my senses. Vaguely recognizing the scent, I racked my brain for its name, without success.

The movie's opening credits began to play, but I couldn't concentrate on anything but the essence of the woman next to me. The smell's presence was incredible and dominating; it was all around me, and there was nothing I could do. I could feel it seeping into my own skin, erasing the smell of the honey melon shampoo in my hair. It was bold, it was daring. It made no apologies. I felt a stirring inside of me, and thought I should be apologizing to Brian who was still next to me, still doing nothing.

She wasn't beautiful, but definitely attractive. Even in the dark, I could see the shine in her soft brown hair; she was probably one of those women who brushed her hair a hundred times before she went to sleep. She fit perfectly under the crook of her companion's arm, releasing an occasional "Oh!" at the movie screen, and I found myself curious about the man next to her. How could he contain himself? How could he keep his hands off of her? I pictured the two of them leaving the movie theatre in a hurry, sneaking intimate glances at each other and thinking intimate thoughts until they reached his apartment; pulling off the highway and onto the shoulder to make out, too excited to wait; him dominating her body with his hands in a way that was more aggressive than her smell.

Brian touched my hand and jarred my thoughts, giving me a questioning look. "Are you OK?" he asked, and I realized that my breathing had changed, become faster in response to my daydreams. I nodded, and he turned his attention back to the movie, allowing his hand to settle on my knee.

I allowed my thoughts to move beyond the sex life of strangers and rest on Brian and me. The last time we had made love was the night before New Year's Eve—almost a year ago, and it was brief, and confusing. I remember sitting on top of him, struggling to maintain a steady rhythm, trying to kiss his neck, his head jerking away, so that my lips reached his pillow. I cried that night, and he promised we would get better, that we would learn. But I'm learning it's impossible to light a match once it's been snuffed out.

There was a time we couldn't get enough of each other—we made love against the shower tiles before work, on his desk during lunch hour, on the living room carpet



before dinner. I recalled a time where I had been at the kitchen sink, washing dishes, and suddenly Brian was behind me, his hands were on me, and the dishes seemed far away. These days, Brian's the one that seems far away, and I end up with a sink full of clean dishes and a lot of unanswered questions. I miss the feel of cold, wet tile again my skin; I miss having rug burns on my knees.

I took a deep breath and inhaled the scent of the perfume. God, it was incredible, a mixture of peppermint and sunshine and the sea. It made me wonder if Brian could smell it, and then I wondered about the last time I had worn perfume.

Then the lights were back on, and Brian was touching my arm.

"Catey? Ready to go, sweetie?" he asked.

I stood up. "Yeah. Let's go."

We hurried down the aisle. I didn't want Brian to get a good look at that woman, but I stole one more glance at her before we exited the theatre. She was laughing, and I hated her.



What Poetry Needs

Joseph A. Jungblut

Poetry needs a sex symbol –
a bare midriffed blonde
with pink lips, diamond-blue eyes,
a whistling belly-button
to read about diverging roads,
the meaning of love,
or a man from Nantucket.
Or the package for the media could be
a wavy-haired body builder, six packed
in a wife-beater T-shirt
and the “must”—a good butt
orating slowly while his muscles tense
and beads of sweat form on his forehead
while he speaks of a fellow in the grass,
a fig of burning candles,
or a rose, etc.

McLuhan’s message does not make room
for whiskered old men in well-worn fedoras
who sing a song of self;
or for totally bald men who only hint at sex
through a car or the names of prostitutes;
or hopped-up drunken drugies
who fail to knock on the stage door
or make a statement by becoming dust in space;
or octogenarians who are out-out damn it
into the tropical streets of Harlem in winter.
Poets are seen as potential suicides,
depressed, obsessed, a mess
whose words are their only success.



Image is everything: sex sells.
Poetry needs sex.
No more trite similes
of a woman's hair and eyes;
no more symbolic impressions
of what love and rolling, salty waves
on a beach have in common;
no more schemes and tropes
lifting life to a new high
titillating the mind to reach perfection.
Poetry just needs sex.

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